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**POPULAR MEDIA MEMORY:  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

150 years after his death, Abraham Lincoln is still an integral part of U.S. American culture and his omnipresence becomes apparent in widely varied shapes: from his portrait on the current five-dollar bill to his name embellishing the hoods of thousands of luxury cars, from the stage show “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” in Disneyland to the integration of the Lincoln Memorial into the plot of *House of Cards*. Two special occasions in 2009 reinforced Lincoln’s ubiquity further. The bicentennial anniversary of his birth was lavishly celebrated with festivities all over the country and Barack Obama frequently referred to the sixteenth president in the context of his own inauguration into the highest political office in the United States of America, e.g., by swearing on Lincoln’s bible and mirroring his historical train route when traveling to Washington, D.C. Thus, it appears more appropriate and plausible than ever before to replenish the already extensive field of research about the Kentucky-born statesman by adding a new perspective: Abraham Lincoln in Popular Media Memory.

Whereas countless polls have been conducted and numerous official appraisals and portrayals put forth and analyzed, it is the main goal of this study to offer an analysis of Lincoln representations in twenty-first century popular media and present his various places within the concept of popular media memory. The study of fictional visual media such as films, TV series, shows, commercials, cartoons, animated series as well as Internet comics, memes, and music videos will reveal the protagonist of this dissertation as an iridescent, multi-faceted personality.

The analyses of 48 objects resulted in a classification into three main categories, thereby mirroring different potential functions of these representations: *The Eulogized Lincoln* refers to depictions glorifying character traits and political achievements of his lifetime; *the Re-Invented Lincoln* includes representations putting the former president into new contexts, making him a spokesperson or counselor for various matters in modern times, or having him fight new conflicts; and *the Demystified Lincoln* has the sixteenth president as an object of teasing, mocking, and ridicule.

This introduction is to provide more room to intensify the already broached aspects, such as emphasizing Lincoln’s cultural significance in today’s America in order to explain and justify my choice of him as the central figure of this study or illustrating Barack Obama’s special relationship to him in more detail. Furthermore, an overview on the current state of

research is not only supposed to illustrate Lincoln's present academic pertinence. By dividing the survey into two sections, namely on publications on Lincoln's lifetime and on scholarly works about his afterlife respectively, I accomplish two further objectives. First, this differentiation enables me to draw a parallel to the above-mentioned categories of the Eulogized and Re-Invented Lincoln. Second, a closer look at recent works on Lincoln's afterlife in particular helps me to distinguish my study from already existing ones, especially dealing with his legacy and impact on following generations, including those in the relevant fields of memory cultural studies and popular cultural studies. In this regard, I aim to detail the thesis of my work by both outlining the gap that I am to fill and thoroughly commenting on my focus, goals, and expectations. As a last step, the presentation of the general outline of this dissertation happens with the objective of providing the interested reader with an easy to follow train of my thoughts and aims.

### 1.1 On the Cultural Significance of Abraham Lincoln

Even more than seven score years after his death, Abraham Lincoln seems omnipresent in today's America and his cultural significance is manifest all over the country. Both public authorities and the private sector demonstrate respect and praise for the former president of the United States in many different ways.

Lincoln's image decorates various pieces of currency of the United States. A portrait of the former president has embellished the obverse of the one-cent coin since 1909. Five years later, the US Federal Reserve Banks put the first five-dollar bill showing the Illinois-rooted president into circulation. Additionally, a portrait of Abraham Lincoln has appeared on various U.S. postal stamps, among them four special issues on the Bicentennial representing different stages of his life. He is illustrated as the "rail-splitter" in order to show that he "achieved success by the sweat of his brow" ("Lincoln's Life"). The second stamp portrays him as a lawyer. I closely connect this life stage to his acquiring the nickname "Honest Abe". The third stamp depicts Lincoln as a politician debating with Stephen A. Douglas, thereby alluding to his rhetorical and political skills. The last stamp shows "the Great Emancipator" as president and commander-in-chief consulting with both Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman towards the end of the Civil War, in this way turning the spotlight to his achievements as president ("Lincoln's Life").

Towns and cities in more than 25 different states bear the name Lincoln, counties and townships not included. Boulevards, highways and National Park sites are named after him<sup>1</sup>; the state of Illinois uses the official slogan “Land of Lincoln”, which is printed on its license plates. Moreover, countless educational and official institutions are named in his honor as well, among them numerous elementary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and libraries. Two holidays are also closely linked with the sixteenth president: He and George Washington share a Federal holiday in their honor called Presidents' Day. Moreover, National Freedom Day is an annual observance that encourages the American people to remember Lincoln's signing of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865 and place emphasis on his role as emancipator.

The erection of memorials and monuments has also been a common way of paying tribute to America's former leader. The most famous ones are probably the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., which was dedicated in 1922, and the oversized image of Lincoln joining those of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson in the rocks of Mount Rushmore, inaugurated fifteen years later. Numerous statues and busts have been erected all over the country in honor of the former president as well, by this means emphasizing different actions and stages of his life.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the U.S. Navy paid homage to its past Commander-in-Chief by christening an aircraft carrier “Abraham Lincoln”.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, many historic sites are open to the public, such as those that commemorate his birthplace in Hodgenville, KY; his various places of residence; the location of his assassination at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C.; and his final resting place at the Lincoln Tomb Memorial in Springfield, IL.

Two recent incidents have even increased Lincoln's perceived ubiquity, namely the events in the context of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birthday and Barack Obama taking office as U.S. president, both taking place in 2009.

The Bicentennial Commission, officially created by the U.S. Congress, coordinated most of the numerous official celebrations of Lincoln's two hundredth birthday in 2009. Amongst

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Lincoln State Park, IN, or Lincoln National Forest, NM. I am aware that some places in southern parts of the USA are named for General Benjamin Lincoln. They are not included in the count of 25 above.

<sup>2</sup> For those interested, I recommend the book *Summers with Lincoln* (2010), in which history teacher Jim Percoco gives a detailed state to state breakdown list of all Lincoln statues. He focuses on seven different statues that symbolize different stages of Lincoln's life, not differentiating between official or private fund raisings.

<sup>3</sup> The US submarine ssb(n) 602 was also named for Lincoln, but it is not on duty anymore.

the many commemorations paying tribute to the legacy of the president who served from 1861 to 1865 were theater plays, exhibitions, national town hall meetings, mother's day celebrations, birthday tributes, national teach-ins, various conferences, and much more. A symposium that took place in Oxford, United Kingdom, in July 2009 examined the global legacy of the president who is so closely linked to his stovepipe hat and focused on four major subjects: Lincoln, the United States and the World; Lincoln, the Emancipator and Liberator; Lincoln, the Nationalist Unifier and Modernizer; and Lincoln, the Progressive Democrat. Though the main focus was laid on Lincoln's legacy and influence on global affairs, all of the presented subjects mirror attributes that Lincoln is still connected with, for example, his role as a global statesman and progressive Democrat as well as his reputation as emancipator, liberator, and savior of the union.

Barack Obama tried to make use of Lincoln's reputation in many ways. For instance, the Hawaii-born politician announced his candidacy for the presidency in Springfield, IL, exactly as Lincoln had done in 1858. On this occasion, Obama referred to Lincoln's "house divided speech"<sup>4</sup>, which was only one of many examples of quoting the former head of state in political statements. Moreover, the U.S. president who most diligently adopted Lincoln as his ideological predecessor took a train trip to Washington to be sworn into office, mirroring the route Lincoln had taken for his first inauguration in 1861, and the entire inauguration paid homage to his arguably most favored precursor. The official slogan "a new birth of freedom" was taken from *The Gettysburg Address*, and Obama swore the Presidential oath by resting his hand on the same Bible Lincoln had used. Additionally, the selection of the set dinner menu resembled Lincoln's choice of simple courses. Even Obama's first measures as president were similar to Lincoln's: Obama appointed the runner-up of his Democratic party, Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State, thus drawing a parallel to the stovepipe president's frequently cited *Team of Rivals*. All these examples indicate that Harvard graduate Obama sought to establish a political affinity to Abraham Lincoln, not least because he is the first African American president. As this study will show, Lincoln is still genuinely present in people's minds and his political reputation, especially corresponding to images of the Eulogized

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<sup>4</sup> Obama said: "and that is why, in the shadow of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln once called on a divided house to stand together, where common hopes and common dreams still, I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for President of the United States."



Lincoln<sup>5</sup>, makes him a perfect reference for today's politicians and Obama in particular, in order to benefit from the former president's persistent popularity.

The various examples show a variety of commemorations of Abraham Lincoln. Though rather initiated and officially established by public authorities, they reflect Lincoln's political achievements and leave their marks right into the twenty-first century. Additionally, recent polls have also indicated Lincoln's present high status. Even though the exact methods and focuses might be different, the *Wall Street Journal* polls of 2000 and 2005 ("Presidential Leadership"), the Siena Poll Rank of 2002 and 2010 ("Siena"), the CSPAN Poll Ranks of 2000 and 2009 ("C-SPAN"), the USPC Poll Rank of 2011 ("United States Presidency"), and the *Washington Post* rankings of 2014 (Rottinghaus) all keep the sixteenth chief of state in their top three of America's greatest presidents. Furthermore, scholar Nate Silver comprised four different rankings by presidential scholars in 2011 (Silver) and put Abraham Lincoln in first place.

Lincoln's frequent presence in today's America is also observable in the private and professional sector. Many businesses, from small family-owned restaurants and stores to worldwide operating corporations, bear the name Lincoln as a label for the company or a product they sell. Two of the most prominent examples are probably the *Lincoln Financial Group* and the *Lincoln Motor Company*. The former was founded as the *Lincoln National Life Insurance Company* as early as 1905 and received Robert Todd Lincoln's explicit "permission to use his father's name and likeness" ("About Lincoln"). The *Lincoln Motor Company*, now part of the *Ford Motor Company*, was established in 1917 (Priddle). Though it experienced a crisis in the late twentieth century, the car manufacturer relaunched its luxury brand *Lincoln* in the year 2013, thereby confirming its affinity to the former president (Vlastic). Myriads of companies were to follow, finding an interim peak of name exploitation in the 1950s, when "ten thousand business enterprises" (Dooley 130) were named for Abraham Lincoln. How many there are today is impossible to say; the range extends from restaurants, hotels, and banks to toys and stores. I assume that especially Lincoln's reputation as "self-made-man" or "hardworking rail splitter" makes him eligible as a patron saint of a company. In contrast to politicians, businessmen might rather allude to Lincoln's traits as a diligent character in contrast to his political achievements. Generally, choosing Lincoln

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<sup>5</sup> The Great Emancipator, Savior of the Union, Rail Splitter, Honest Abe, etc.

presumably is done in order to cash in on his reputation—as I consider that a business acts on a maxim of making profit. Hogan sees this trend currently persisting in the field of tourism in particular (2011, 6).

## 1.2 State of Research

A closer look at recent publications on Abraham Lincoln strengthens my impression that the former president is more present than ever. Numerous publications cover a wide variety of different focuses, among them even encyclopedia (Finkelman and Hershock), dictionaries (Boas; Kay), and anthologies (Holzer 2009). Since it is hardly possible to gather all of the plentiful publications from so many different scholarly fields—such as Sociology, History, Civil War, Film, Political, or Communication studies—and assemble them in an overview that claims to be complete, a selection of studies must suffice to demonstrate the status quo of recent scholarly interest<sup>6</sup>. In order to limit the incredible affluence of scholarship on the sixteenth president to a workable amount, I decide to focus on publications that came out between 2008 and 2014. This period allows me to include those publications closely connected to his two hundredth birthday as well as most recent developments. Furthermore, I mainly concentrate on works published as monographs or essay collections and will refer to single articles on a less frequent basis. I justify this step with the aforementioned amount of academic works and the extensive nature of this study itself. As 2009 marked a year of two history-shaping events, namely the aforementioned Bicentennial anniversary and the inauguration of President Obama, I have been confronted by a myriad of publications related to the birthday president. Therefore, it seems likely that this survey might have neglected publications considered elementary by other scholars.

Recent scholarly works on Lincoln seem to cover every imaginable focus, perspective, and subject area<sup>7</sup>. I split up this abundance of publications into two main areas of interest, which facilitates this assessment: Firstly, those publications focusing on *his lifetime* from 1809 to 1865, including emphases on his private and professional life, and, secondly, those studies

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<sup>6</sup> Frank J. Williams speaks of “more than seven hundred books [about Lincoln being published] between 2007 and 2011” (2012, 89).

<sup>7</sup> Most profound sources turned out to be in this connection *The Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* and *The Journal of American History*.

concentrating on *his afterlife*, i.e., his legacy, impact, and influence on ensuing ages until today.

### 1.2.1 *On Lincoln's Lifetime*

The sheer amount of publications that are committed to shedding new light on specific stages of the life of the sixteenth president is overwhelming. Besides full-fledged and extensive biographies covering his whole lifetime, other publications are restricted to a detailed analysis of certain aspects, whether his private role as a family member; his professional duties as lawyer, politician, and president; character traits and ideologies; or his relationship to other people—just to give a few examples.

Biographies represent a more general way of attending to Lincoln's lifetime. Probably the most notable examples of this type of approach are the frequently cited works of Carl Sandburg (multi-volume, 1926, 1939), Stephen B. Oates (*With Malice toward None: A Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 1977), and Benjamin P. Thomas (*Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*, 1952). However, many other authors have chosen to focus their work on Lincoln's entire life in recent years, thereby enriching the existing field of biographies by using their different educational and professional backgrounds, setting diverse priorities in this way.

As its name implies, Allen C. Guelzo's *Lincoln: A Very Short Introduction* (2009) makes no secret of its briefness. Guelzo, who specializes in the Civil War era, subsumes periods of Lincoln's life under punchy keywords, such as equality, advancement, law, liberty, debate, emancipation, and reunion—all of them used to reflect attributes given to his subject: Lincoln as a man of equality, Lincoln the Lawyer, the Liberator, the Eloquent Politician, the Emancipator, and Savior of the Union. Another example of recent short biographies is James M. McPherson's *Abraham Lincoln* (2009). The Pulitzer-Prize winning author manages to summarize the most essential events of Lincoln's life from his birth in Kentucky to his death in Washington, D.C., “without oversimplification and overgeneralization” (preface) in 66 pages of text. His essay seems to fill a niche beside other enormous biographies and provides a synthesis of the president's current and future historiography (Sauerwein).

The most impressive example of recently published biographies, to my view, is the repeatedly cited comprehensive multi-volume book *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* by Michael Burlingame (2008). More than two thousand pages about Lincoln's life provide a detailed

scholarly description of aspects of the president's lifetime that remained unexamined in other books; for example, the American historian uses no less than 700 pages to focus on Lincoln's life before assuming the presidency. In contrast to Nicolay and Hay (1890), for instance, Burlingame makes no claim to offer a historical analysis of the Civil War, explaining that he focuses on Lincoln himself. Another substantial work was authored by Ronald C. White, Jr., who, in a total of 800 pages, illuminates Lincoln's life (*A. Lincoln: A Biography*. 2009). The Princeton alumnus offers a biography on Lincoln's moral and intellectual development by using his notes as reflections that "bring into view a private Lincoln" (4). By referring to Lincoln's various nicknames, among them "Honest Abe", "Rail-splitter", "Old Abe", "Father Abraham", and "Great Emancipator" early in the first chapter, White regards these aliases as "definitions" of Lincoln and uses them to illustrate his growth and changes "through critical episodes in his life" (4). Furthermore, the author focuses on various issues, such as the president's humorous character, his attitude towards religion and slavery, his proclivity for Shakespearean theater, his ability to benefit from the information revolution, and his rhetorical talent, through which White offers a wide-ranging insight into Lincoln the man.

Various scholars have tried to bring to light the private Lincoln, attempting to get an understanding of his personality, character, personal views, or his life as a family man. Analyses of Abraham Lincoln's personal traits are not hard to come by when looking at recent publications, among which recurring features such as his intellectual genius in the form of rhetorical skills (Henson) and ingenuity (Ferguson; Smith; Lander on his interest in science), and his sense of values (Guelzo, 2009 "Man") can be found. An investigation of Lincoln's writings, with Kaplan's *Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer* from 2008 as the arguably most prominent example, has been used to draw conclusions about his character, ideologies, and aforementioned eloquence. Furthermore, there have been studies on his probable views on religion (Mansfield, Calhoun and Morel, Cawardine, Szasz), other beliefs (Wilson 2014 on fatalism, Mervin on the subject of destiny from a psychological perspective), or (homo)sexual orientation (R. Miller 2012). As a counterpart to the study of his writings, Lincoln's reading habits (Bray) have been the subject of investigation as well. In addition, other authors are mainly interested in Lincoln's life as a family man, trying to reach conclusions about him by focusing on people he was close to—his extended family and ancestors (Lachman), his marriage (Epstein 2008, Winkle 2011), and his children (Hutchinson 2009; Fox 2012 on Tad Lincoln, Emerson 2012 on Robert). Especially Mary Todd Lincoln has been a frequent

subject of investigation with manifold focuses—from comprehensive biographies (Baker 2008 [1987]<sup>8</sup>; Clinton 2009; Williams and Burkheimer, 2012; Evans<sup>9</sup>) to a focus on her assumed mental (Pritchard and Emerson 2011<sup>10</sup>) and addiction issues (Beidler with case studies). However, there are also examples of a more positive judging of the president's wife (Ellison 2014<sup>11</sup>). Some scholars have discussed probable health problems concerning the pater familias himself, e.g. Nassir Ghaemi devotes a chapter of his book *A First-Rate Madness: Uncovering the Links between Leadership and Mental Illness* to Lincoln and Glenna R. Schroeder-Lein even wrote a book of 90 pages on the same topic (*Lincoln and Medicine*). Even unusual topics, such as his probable culinary preferences (Eighmey), have been investigated, underlining the manifold insights into the private Lincoln from a scholarly perspective.

Besides illuminating the private Lincoln, a great number of publications on the Kentucky-born president limit themselves to aspects of his professional life, some of which to his time as a lawyer, others to particular occasions or intervals as an aspiring politician, but most about his time as Head of State. As his term as President of the United States was so multifarious and eventful, scholars offer a variety of different stresses on this distinguished stage of Lincoln's professional life.

One publication of recent years even focuses on the early stage of his working life, preceding his career path as a lawyer but arguably already preparing it. Richard Campanella (2010) put his main emphasis on the years 1828 to 1831, when young Lincoln worked on floatboats on the Mississippi river, leaving home and encountering slavery and its impact for the first time. Stowell et al., who edited the four-volume *The Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Legal Documents and Cases* in 2008, offer a detailed insight into 55 out of the many cases Esquire Lincoln was involved with. In *Lincoln's Ladder to the Presidency: The Eighth Judicial Circuit*, Guy C. Fraker (2014) traces the striving advocate's way through his twenty-three year-legal career and ascribes to this period a formative and preparatory significance on his way to the later presidency. Editors Frank Williams and Roger Billings (2010) collected several essays on different aspects of Lincoln's juridical occupation, thereby evaluating the attorney's progress and examining his different core businesses from a debtor-creditor lawyer

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<sup>8</sup> New edition from 1987 original.

<sup>9</sup> New edition from 1932 original.

<sup>10</sup> Originally written in 1927, now published with annotated texts.

<sup>11</sup> Ellison accuses son Robert of manipulating.

in Illinois to a presidential international lawyer in Washington. In contrast, George A. Dekle Sr. (2014) narrows down his analysis to one particular lawsuit and aims to link this instance to the further establishment of Lincoln's character.

Other scholarly works concentrate on his pre-presidential *political* career, though, admittedly, this focus is partly intertwined and overlaps with Lincoln's work as a man of the law. The issue of race and slavery is the one specific subject that, owing to the very conditions of his lifetime, accompanied his complete political career and thus attracts a high level of interest in academia today. Additionally, recent scholars have taken detailed looks at Lincoln's general political ideals and attitudes, specific speeches and debates during his time as a legislator as well as his performance in particular elections.

From today's point of view, it looks as if there is no definite agreement on how exactly Lincoln tackled the issue of race and slavery, if he had a master plan from the very beginning, or if he was rather driven by external circumstances. In recent years, the many publications on this matter exemplify the topicality of and dissent on this question. To begin with, George M. Frederickson argues in his book *Big Enough to Be Inconsistent: Abraham Lincoln Confronts Slavery and Race* (2008) that Lincoln might have started as a "racial separationist" only to evolve "into someone who viewed African Americans as potentially equal citizens of a color-blind democracy" (28)—a notion not particularly new (Burkhimer 2009). Randall Kennedy classifies the signer of the Emancipation Proclamation a "racial pessimist", claiming that Lincoln belonged to a school whose way of thinking was that "racial animus and prejudice [were] so deeply embedded that they [would] never go away" (Lambert 2013). In doing so, he compares Lincoln to other pessimists such as Jefferson and Malcom X, at the same time counterposing him to Frederick Douglass<sup>12</sup> and Martin Luther King, Jr. Eric Foner's *The Fiery Trial* (2011) puts much effort into contextualizing Lincoln, "return[ing him] to his historical setting" (xvii). The author also spends a great deal of time on the sixteenth president's thoughts on colonization, arguing that political Lincoln "believed that voluntary colonization was a good idea" (Fitzgerald 2014, 68) and would only back away from it gradually. So did Magness and Page (2011), who studied Lincoln's attitude towards black resettlement, but took a rather radical view. They claim that the president did not entirely let go of his more and more refining thoughts of sending black people to other countries even

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<sup>12</sup> Stauffer (2008) offers another comparison to Douglass.

after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, thereby denying the Emancipator an undisputed, noble role in the matter of race and slavery—at least in terms of colonization. In *Lincoln and Race*, Striner (2012) arrives at the less incisive conclusion that his object of investigation had “no racial bias” (2) at all.<sup>13</sup>

Backing away from the main question of slavery, Rich Lowry (2013) concentrates on Lincoln’s sustainable work as a political figure, in particular his importance for and influence on the American dream, how he experienced it himself, and his beliefs in economic freedom. Although the latter part might touch the topic of slavery to some extent, I see a prevailing connection to its influence on paving the way for a modern industrial economy through a revolution in transportation and communication, both of which Lincoln pushed as a believer in a mobile society (DeRose 2013). Another well-researched field within the pre-presidential political career is the rivalry with Stephen J. Douglas. Sometimes composed in a more narrative style (Morris, 2008; Guelzo, 2008; and Egerton, 2010), other times rather focusing on the speeches itself (Davis and Wilson, 2008), all scholars are in unison in considering the public verbal exchange between the two Illinois candidates for the U.S. Senate in 1858—oftentimes referred to as “Lincoln-Douglas debates” or “Great Debates”—as another important step on the way to Lincoln’s presidency.

In recent years, an enormous number of scholars have explored Abraham Lincoln’s four-year term in office as president of the United States of America with multifold different emphases. The flood of topics spans general, broad overviews to analyses of lesser-known occurrences of Lincoln’s time in the highest executive office of the country.

The Civil War is likely the most predominant topic that had a direct, incisive impact on Lincoln’s presidency. Arguably, the most complex research in this field is Michael Burlingame’s *Lincoln and the Civil War* (2011), in which the author investigates the leadership qualities during times of war, identifying the commander-in-chief as a central figure in achieving victory. An additional work on the president as leader of military forces is James McPherson’s *Tried by War* (2008), which attributes Lincoln the role of having set new standards for the presidential function of being the supreme commander.<sup>14</sup> In his book *We Have the War upon Us: The Onset of the Civil War*, William J. Cooper focuses on the five months between the presidential election and the outbreak of the war and offers a critical

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<sup>13</sup> I recommend Ross (2009) for further reference on ethics.

<sup>14</sup> See also Symonds 2008 on Lincoln and US Navy.

opinion on the newly elected President and why a sectional compromise failed. Other scholars examined particular incidents of the Civil War era, such as constitutional conflicts in general (Neely 2011), a more specific example in this matter being Lincoln's suspension of the Writ of Habeas Corpus (Dueholm, 2008; McGinty, 2011; J. White, 2011). Furthermore, analyses of the president's reconstruction plans (Rodrigue 2013 with a more comprehensive approach, Striner 2013 solely focusing on the Ten-Percent Plan) as well as the Emancipation Proclamation (Holzer 2012a, Masur 2012, Manning 2013, Chambers 2013) have enriched the academic field. However, the Civil War was not the only military conflict under scholarly examination. Gustav Niebuhr (2014) took up Lincoln's role in the Dakota War of 1862, in particular the influence of a bishop on the presidential decision to spare the lives of many Sioux.

Other researchers backed away from action-related topics and moved their center of studies towards Lincoln's words and speeches. Allen C. Guelzo (2012b) edited a quite comprehensive compilation of speeches, not only from Lincoln's time as president but already starting with a speech from 1832. This volume succeeded his previous work, *Lincoln as a Man of Ideas* (2009), which had also made use of his writings and offers not only a listing of speeches but also a more dynamic collection of essays on various stages of the political thinker's ideals *through* his communication. Moreover, Terence Ball (*Lincoln: Political Writings and Speeches*, 2013) published a book focusing on both oral transmissions of Lincoln's words as well as written forms of communication. Perhaps owing to the author's British origin, he additionally offers a helpful introduction, including a chronological overview of important incidents and short descriptions of political companions, probably to provide the reader with some guiding background information on the individual steps of Lincoln's political path. In contrast to the aforementioned publications, *The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman* by David Lowenthal (2012), not only reprints twenty speeches from 1838 to 1865, but also offers helpful interpretations of those selected addresses. However, not only broad approaches to Lincoln's writings have been made available in recent years. James L. Huston (2012), for instance, concentrated on two speeches in particular, the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address, and elaborated on the "lost cause of the north"—as the title of the article suggests.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Other noteworthy publications in this context: Levin (2014) on Second Inaugural Address. Elmore (2009), Johnson (2012), Peatman (2013) on Gettysburg Address; Lehrman (2008) on Peoria Speech.



The works presented tackling the political Lincoln which stand out most are either large, comprehensive monographies that seem to be eligible for enriching the academic landscape by their sheer abundance of insights alone (Burlingame 2008, White 2010), or studies that concentrate on small details of his political life (discussed studies by Niebuhr, Campanella, Dekle, or Striner). Even though I have not encountered any new findings that have shaken Lincoln's prevailing image and achievements, I nevertheless see the trend of critical approaches and scholarly disagreement especially in studies on the very field of Lincoln the politician, e.g., discussing the Emancipator's "true" position towards the issues of race and slavery or other "key policies" (Pinsker, 439). In addition, both Guelzo (*Lincoln: A Very Short Introduction*) and McPherson (*Abraham Lincoln*) introduced strikingly short biographies of Lincoln to the academic landscape, probably with the intention of addressing newly interested readers due to the special circumstances of the year of publication.

Another thematic focal point of recent Lincoln studies was his relationship to other people during his tenure. Two scholars have investigated the president's interaction and relationship with the press. Whereas Harald Holzer (2014) shows a president who deliberately used the press to speak to and influence his people, e.g., by closing disloyal newspapers, Gregory Borchard (2011) limits himself to exploring the reciprocal influence of Lincoln and *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley while also supporting the assumption that the president was extremely active in influencing the popular press.

Beside his relations to the media, Lincoln's connection to his secretaries has also been of scholarly interest. By selecting and editing Gideon Welles' diary entries as well as putting them in a readable order, J. Ronald Spencer (2014) allows insights into Lincoln's tenure from the secretary of navy's point of view. Lincoln's secretary of state, William Henry Seward, also attracted academic attraction: Walter Stahr (2012) directs his scholarly interest to one of Lincoln's closest advisors and offers a comprehensive biography with many references to the president. Another example is Joshua Zeitz (2014), who gives an understanding of Lincoln's two private secretaries, John Hay and John Nicolay, how they interacted with their superior in a rather intimate atmosphere and helped shape Lincoln's legacy after his death.

Concerning the president's death itself, current publications deal with a variety of insights, such as the assassination, circumstances of his demise, possible plots, or the mourning of the country. The most striking work is arguably *The Lincoln Assassination Encyclopedia*. Not

only does editor Edward Steers (2010) offer nearly 595 pages of detailed information on possibly all persons, parties, or places involved, he also provides an equally extensive chronological listing of related occurrences between 1860 and 1865. Four years later, Steers (2014) published an analysis of the assassination plot, thereby opposing allegations of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton having been involved or Booth having committed the murder because he was insane. Instead, the American historian highlights Booth's initial plan of kidnapping the president that the assassin changed only later as a reaction to military circumstances. A comprehensive edition by Harald Holzer et al. (2010) gathers the diverse approaches to this topic and assembles studies on, inter alia, the assassination and funeral, its outcome especially in regard to subsequent trials as well as the public reaction including its mourning—and the lack of it respectively. Justin Carisio (2008) takes a Delawarean point of view, highlighting that even though Lincoln failed to win the “diamond state” in both presidential elections, grieving still was intense in the small community located east to the capital.

The previously introduced two main tendencies around scholarly works on the *political* Lincoln are transferrable to recent research focusing on his whole lifetime as well. For one, collections and biographies have enlarged the academic landscape, with Burlingame's (2013) being the most comprehensive one since Sandburg's multi-volume work from the first half of the nineteenth century. Burlingame's account of Lincoln's life is even available in a more complex version online, which underlines the multifaceted digital possibilities with virtually no limitation to number of pages or storage capacity. In my opinion, the emergence of the many biographies is to be associated with the occurrences of the year 2009 and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some researchers climbed on the cash cow bandwagon in this respect. In addition, besides the already mentioned ongoing debate on the president's political tactics, I see a current scholarly emphasis on people surrounding Lincoln, including his wife and family, which a look at current projects of the Lincoln Studies Center at Knox College confirms (“Research and Publication”). I attribute this to the fact that a number of thorough examinations of Lincoln already exist and scholars therefore now trying to find niches and indirect ways of exploring the sixteenth head of state. My overview has shown that, even though the former president's nimbus and aura have been questioned from time to

time<sup>16</sup>, his main achievements have not been confounded and most researchers explored Lincoln's lifetime rather favorably—as my listing of the manifold studies on his rhetorical skills in both writings and speaking, values, and political achievements particularly revealed.

### 1.2.2 *On Lincoln's Afterlife*

Scholars from many different fields have worked on illuminating the time after Lincoln's death and the rich legacy that was to follow. Similar to academic works on his lifetime achievements, presented above, there are just as many remarkable investigations of the many impacts Lincoln's deeds have had ever since. Again, it is by no means feasible to present a complete list. Hence, I focus on the most important and relevant publications dealing with Lincoln's present influence on many different arenas: comparisons to other historical or recent public figures and politicians, references to leadership or rhetorical skills as well as other hero-related topics. Furthermore, much research has been conducted on Lincoln's role in connection to memory. Since this scholarly field is highly relevant to the goals of this study, a presentation of those recent works is necessary in order to differentiate my approach from existing studies.

Whereas *An Unfinished Revolution: Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln* (Blackburn) describes the president's exchange with a contemporary and the influence the Union's fight for the abolition of slavery had on the European continent, other writings draw comparisons with later political figures or institutions, such as Nelson Mandela, the McCarthy-Era, David Cameron<sup>17</sup>, Barack Obama<sup>18</sup>, or offer more general approaches<sup>19</sup>.

A variety of studies and articles address Lincoln's role model status in today's environment, both in terms of leadership qualities in the professional sector and hero-esque status in society. The Schumpeter Column of *The Economist* ("Lincoln and Leadership") criticizes the hype of making the former president an omnipresent example of ultimate guidance abilities, by explicitly attacking Donald Phillips' 1993 book *Lincoln on Leadership*

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<sup>16</sup> Guelzo's "Does Lincoln Still Belong to the Ages" (2012) offers a good overview on questions of racism, homosexuality, or insanity.

<sup>17</sup> Wapshott (2013) on what David Cameron should learn from Lincoln.

<sup>18</sup> As already mentioned in the introductory sentences of this chapter in more detail, Lincoln shaped Obama's world in many ways. One interesting overview is offered by Susan Schulten (2009).

<sup>19</sup> See Peraino (2013) on Lincoln's influence on foreign policies.

with the subheading “Executive Strategies for Tough Times”. Other attempts at using the sixteenth president as a guiding executive model in professional journals are available, for instance, in the field of human resources (Moreton 2008), health care (Simone 2012), or management (McCombs 2013). Frank J. Williams takes a more general approach and describes the sixteenth president as “one of the finest examples of the American dream” and a “true hero”, explaining why Lincoln serves as a perfect instance of what Americans look for (2012, 7). Similarly, Rachel D. Hutchins (2011) picks up the subject of heroism and looks at representations of Lincoln in history textbooks for elementary-school students, particularly in the context of forming national identity, and observes a “multiculturalist movement” (649) and backlash from the early 1980s to 2003. Keeping these findings in mind when approaching my analysis of contemporary popular media artifacts will assist in testing if this trend is noticeable in my personal framing.

However, the bearded president’s influence on today is not restricted to a hero image. Another recent research focus shares the basic idea of my approach by looking at the former president’s role within the concept of memory<sup>20</sup>, thereby covering a variety of perspectives and approaches. Two of the most prominent researchers in this area are historian Merrill D. Peterson and sociologist Barry Schwartz.<sup>21</sup> While a brief mentioning of both scholars works at this point is helpful, a more detailed presentation of their concepts will be an integral part of chapter 2 when it comes to establishing the theoretical framework of this study.

In his book *Lincoln in American Memory*, published in 1994, Peterson establishes a model of a changing conception of Lincoln within American memory and narrows it down to five prevalent themes: “Savior of Union”, “Great Emancipator”, “Man of the People”, “First American”, and “Self-Made Man”. In his research, he examines poetry, paintings and other visual pieces of art, (early) biographies, letters, studies, memorials, fiction, and modern historiography (Blight 1994) but also tackles myths and hoaxes, such as encounters with spiritualist mediums. Whereas some critics see Peterson attributing to Lincoln mainly functions of a reflecting “mirror” (Blight 1265) or “echo” (Stokes 55), I would argue that Peterson’s main line of argumentation also describes an inconsistent Lincoln image that has been vividly changing over the course of time. As this image was oftentimes used, shaped,

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<sup>20</sup> At this point, I refer to memory as a very general term.

<sup>21</sup> Whereas I will postpone a detailed discussion of their individual concepts of “American” and “social” memory to a later point when providing the theoretical framework of this study in chapter 2, I will mainly present a description of their textual corpuses in order to prepare a distinction of their projects to mine.

and reshaped by various agents to their, sometimes even opposing, needs (Reynold), this view goes hand in hand with my categorization of a Re-Invented Lincoln. Furthermore, though focusing on different texts, Peterson's installation of various themes perfectly fits to my idea of a Eulogized Lincoln.

Barry Schwartz has dedicated a majority of his research to the field of collective memory studies. In his first major work focusing on the sixteenth president (*Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*, 2000), the sociologist traces Lincoln's positive reputation from the time of his death in 1865 through World War I by looking at representations in, amongst others, paintings, sculptures, schoolbooks, newspapers, and oratory. Schwartz primarily associates Lincoln's reputational rise with the enhanced general well-being in the progressive era<sup>22</sup> amongst the American people and portrays a development of the former president symbolizing "nationhood", "industrial democracy", and "unity", describing a rise from "martyr to idol". Primarily, Schwartz notes, "Lincoln was remembered in different ways by different groups" (Pitcaithley 98), thereby agreeing in principle with Peterson's position. In his second book, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era* (2008), Schwartz describes a steady decline of Lincoln's prestige following its "apex" (headline chapter 2, 59) after the Second World War until the present. The scholar explains this argument by postulating a general waning in the need of a concept of greatness (chapter 6 on postmodernism and multiculturalism) and a decline in Lincoln's public relevance, resulting in a decreasing reverence in particular (Frick). According to Schwartz, the respect for the "great emancipator" (16) represents the only remaining image in the post-heroic era, leaving behind former reputations such as "Savior of the Union", "Man of the People", "First American" and "Self-Made Man".

Both scholars offer important keys for the fundamental ideas of my study, mainly their initiatives of investigating Lincoln's role in the context of memory concepts. Whereas I join Schwartz in his criticism of Peterson's sticking to a descriptive part only, I deem the latter's finding *that* different agents think and make different uses of Lincoln to be vital. As Schwartz extends his study with sources of quantitative analysis, including national polls, citation counts, and memorial visitor statistics, my approach indeed differs fundamentally from his, especially in terms of the text corpus. However, I consider his estimation of a decline in

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<sup>22</sup> Guelzo agrees to this line of argumentation in "Does Lincoln Still Belong to the Ages?" (2012).

Lincoln's reputation amongst the American people worth reassessing in the frame of my investigation—especially concerning his view that the image of “the Great Emancipator” was the only remaining positive predominant image at the time of publication in 2008.

This very topic, the evaluation of Lincoln's role in the emancipation process, has been boiling recently, seemingly triggered by Lerone Bennett's renewed assertion in the new millennium that the signer of the Emancipation Proclamation was a white supremacist<sup>23</sup>. However, most scholars opposed these views (K. Wilson 457). Lincoln's relationship to and position within today's African American community has nevertheless been a predominant and debated academic subject ever since. Both Barry Schwartz and Kirt H. Wilson explicitly linked this issue with the concept of “memory”. Whereas the former emphasizes Guelzo's (2004) take of a “diminishing black affection for Lincoln” (Schwartz 2009, 27) by pointing to various polls and statistics, the latter restricts himself to an analysis and interpretation of Lincoln's rhetoric between 1860 and 1863. He eventually arrives at the conclusion that the former president could at best be referred to as a “mediator of emancipation” (475) and that the quest for a definite answer is unrealizable after all. However, the only line Wilson draws in terms of memory is that he discusses the contemporary “academic debate” (455) on the affiliation between Lincoln and today's African Americans. In this way, his approach fundamentally differs from mine. Nevertheless, what remains from both scholarly works is the question if Lincoln's relationship with the African American community takes on a special role when investigated within the framework of my study.

The Kunhardt family, who has been building up a Lincoln collection for five generations (Liebson), published a remarkable exploration of Lincoln's remembrance in 2008. In *Looking for Lincoln: The Making of an American Icon*, the authors integrate a huge amount of primary sources, such as texts and especially photographs. Short narratives by a diverse group of people, amongst them Northerners and Southerners as well as blacks and whites, help the Kunhardts outline a volatile remembrance of Lincoln from the time of the president's death until the passing away of his son Robert in 1926. The collectors determine five different phases within this period, in which Lincoln's legacy and place in memory were a subject of vivid debate: After a time of mourning that acted out differently amongst the mentioned groups right after the president's assassination, primarily friends and family started their work

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<sup>23</sup> Bennett originally brought up the question in 1968 already (“Was Abe”), renewed accusations in 2000 and later on (Striner 2012, Dirck).

of building up Lincoln's positive image. This rather positive period was followed by a time of a "betrayed"<sup>24</sup> memory, in which the nation became tired of the emancipated slaves and an "abandonment of federal reconstruction" (Erekson). Kunhardt locates this low point in Lincoln's reputation between 1876 and 1908 but claims that Lincoln's renown was able to recover subsequently because of the immense biography by his secretaries John G. Nicolay and John Hay and the African American community discovering Lincoln as a popular ambassador for their needs. According to Kunhardt, Lincoln's ultimate redemption became apparent around the events of his centennial birthday and its commemoration, such as the reunion at Gettysburg in 1913, the occurrence of World War I and the nation's need for a "statesman" (437) or the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in the capital in 1922. Though Kunhardt rather conveys the idea of a "brutal" fight over the remembrance of Lincoln, with family and close friends guarding the president's legacy against external attacks, the dismantled main message is closely related to Schwartz' version inasmuch as different times result in different needs and thus in a different position of a remembrance of Abraham Lincoln. However, in terms of the handling of the notion of memory, Kunhardt's concept clearly differs from mine as it deals with a different time frame and memory approach<sup>25</sup>.

In his essay "Does Lincoln Still Belong to the Ages?" (2012), Allen C. Guelzo dedicates himself to answering this very question. He traces an alternation between groups admiring Lincoln, e.g. various churches glorifying him in *angel*-like manner, and others confronting him with hostility, especially after the fading glow of the progressive era<sup>26</sup>. In his conclusion, Guelzo takes a stand against the radical animosities towards Lincoln and makes the following assertions: Lincoln was "crucial to saving the Union" (12), he "insisted that democratic politics must have a moral foundation" (12), he "freed the slaves" (13), and "set the agenda for a new political generation" (13). Furthermore, the author explains Lincoln's still present relevancy with a mixture of "mystery", "mystification", and a set of "agreeable personality traits" closely linked to "political leadership" (all 13). Concerning pop cultural appearances, Guelzo claims that Lincoln reflects an image of "poor repair" (10) and considers him a "figure of jest" (10). Since he does not substantiate his claims, I aim to examine his assertion and will

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<sup>24</sup> Chapter 3 is headlined "Betrayal".

<sup>25</sup> Whereas Kunhardt refers takes original photographs and their preserving and archiving ending in 1926 as a basis, my study in particular analysis modern popular media and is seeking to explore Lincoln's recent pictures in memory.

<sup>26</sup> Schwartz agrees with this argumentation and adds that the death of Lincoln's former companions led to a first dent in the president's acceptance.

keep his general findings in mind when investigating representations of Abraham Lincoln in contemporary popular culture.

Although Andrew Ferguson describes himself as a “journalist, not a scholar” (275), his book *Land of Lincoln* (2007) is nevertheless of value in connection to my study, although he takes us away from the related field of memory studies and represents the first example of works that contribute to my approach to popular culture. His stories of discoveries and encounters with the manifold appearances of Lincoln while touring the United States of America—amongst them impersonators, restaurant owners, collectors, management trainers, monuments, and many more—might not be a scholarly fit, but, in my opinion, show Lincoln’s present relevance and diverse meanings to different people. At the same time, the book indirectly substantiates my proposition to investigate modern-day appearances of the sixteenth president in an academic work. The same holds true for Jackie Hogan’s *Lincoln Inc.: Selling the Sixteenth President in Contemporary America*. Hogan likewise tours the United States and visits, for instance, sites, teacher workshops, and exhibits, with the goal of exploring “the use of the sixteenth president for political, ideological, or financial gain” (7). Just like Ferguson, she does not claim to compete with comprehensive academic works, since she takes an “outsider’s perspective” (10), but I consider her approach of regarding “constructions of Lincoln [as] symbolic constructions of the nation” (2) fruitful, as she includes in her exploration elements of what I will refer to as popular artifacts. Though focusing on the selling and profit-making aspect in this regard, she clearly connects the multifarious uses of Lincoln with the idea of drawing conclusions about contemporary American sentiments and the forming of an identity (2, 9), both of which I consider enriching for my own approach.

In his book *Abraham Lincoln: The Image of His Greatness* (2009), Fred Reed, long-time collector and numismatist, emphasizes Lincoln’s lasting omnipresence and worldwide prominence as he defines money as a first mass medium and important impact. His arrangement of chapters resembles already established notions as he pursues a favorable development from a rail splitting Honest Abe into an idealized Lincoln, including tags such as “Father Abraham”, “the Great Emancipator”, or “Savior of the Union”, but also follows Lincoln’s descent from this peak as an idol into becoming trivialized and ridiculed. Although James M. Corneliussen (2011) calls Reed’s depiction of this downfall overstated, I consider Reed’s presented work helpful for my purposes, especially in regard to his inclusion of popular items, such as advertisements. However, Reed lacks a deep analysis of those and,



thus, only gives a personal assessment of the period that my scholarly investigation focuses on.

### 1.3 Focus and Goals

The research presented above includes works on Lincoln's professional life, many private aspects of his lifetime as well as explorations on his legacy and impact on following generations until today. This survey has shown that the position of Abraham Lincoln in popular culture studies and in memorial culture studies has not yet been adequately researched. My approach focuses on his representations in contemporary popular media and claims that the investigation of their potential socially embedded functions allows inferences about the current attitudes of American people towards the Kentucky-born political leader. This has never been done before.

My coinage of the term popular media memory conflates this approach and, simply put, regards popular media as media of collective memories. This theoretical framework will be outlined in the subsequent chapter in detail. As previously argued, I consider the introduction of the new term necessary due to the novelty of my approach on the one hand and the lack of adaptable definitions of its single ingredients, i.e., collective memories and popular media, on the other.

Whereas certain previous studies put Lincoln in the context of memory studies (Schwartz, Peterson) but neglected the focus on a connection to popular media, yet others present Lincoln and his appearances in popular culture (Ferguson, Hogan) but missed a clear connection to memory studies or sufficient scholarly perspectives respectively. Popular media memory aims to combine both aspects. Additionally, neither aforementioned approach focuses on my text corpus of popular media.

A theoretical construct is nothing without an adequate definition of its components. Since I faced unclear associations and a variety of terms within memory studies, and in particular different definitions for the very same terms, an outline of my understanding of collective memories is indispensable. Furthermore, I cannot determine the popular media artifacts to be dealt with in this study without having defined what "popular" means in the first place.

Hence, the following theoretical chapter will include a presentation of my notion of

collective memories based on different concepts from memory studies. Furthermore, I will outline what general ideas of media of collective memories have been scholarly explored in order to prepare and justify my approach of considering and implementing *popular* media as media of collective memories. This implies that an outlining of what I consider “popular” is necessary as another intermediate step, allowing me to prepare the later selection of objects of investigation based on the defined parameters. Finally, the merging of the concepts of popular media and media of collective memories will be accomplished by outlining their interfaces, which will eventually further support the suitability of the coinage of popular media memory. After this point, I will be able to set up and in particular present my list of objects of investigation that I consider for analysis as this choice depends highly on the comprehensive implementation of what criteria popular media artifacts have to meet within the framework of this study.

I have attempted to distinguish my approach from already existing works explicitly, especially those touching on the subjects of memory and/or popular culture. I have outlined that no approach so far brings Lincoln together in both memory and popular media and that when the sixteenth president is part of memory related studies, either the concepts of memory differ from mine or, as indicated, that the previously discussed text corpora vary significantly from mine. This indication will become even better founded after the definition of popular media memory, which is accompanied by the selection of popular media artifacts as objects of investigation within this study, at the end of the next chapter.

Another difference that distinguishes my work from already existing publications is my remote perspective from my desk in Germany. Although I might elicit criticism for looking at one of the most American presidents from such a distance, I claim my position rather beneficial as it corresponds to the concept of Transnationalism in American studies seeking an “inter/transnational dialogue” (Lenz, 394) and “foster[ing] a re-thinking of the national” (Pease, 5). Thus, my inclusions of German research approaches into my theoretical framework, such as Erll on memory studies or Kelleter (2012) on “the popular”, are enriching as they might not be generally known by U.S. scholars. Furthermore, my view on the president of the Civil War era is arguably somewhat more objective and unbiased since I have not been exposed to Lincoln my whole life long. Additionally, I argue in connection to the selection of the objects of studies that if *I* was able to encounter them while residing in

Germany, a certain level of popularity exists in them per se<sup>27</sup>.

The analyses of more than 47 representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media could have been categorized and arranged in various ways, three of which I gave serious consideration to. A first thought, and probably the most obvious one, was the use of a chronological order in accordance with the intermediate chapter 3 dealing with depictions from 1865 to 1999. However, since the subchapter's chronological order was mainly based on the subsequent emergence of new media in the course of the twentieth century, I considered this justification obsolete as all relevant media, such as films, television, the Internet, et cetera, were already present in 2000. Furthermore, the development and production of certain objects of investigation required several years, which makes it difficult to place them adequately within the already small time frame of 14 years. For instance, the development of the motion picture *Lincoln* took more than a decade alone ("Spielberg on Lincoln"). A second possibility would have been to arrange the results of aforementioned analyses according to their specific genres and/or corresponding types of media. At first sight, this seemed to be a promising concept as it appeared that, simply put, the bigger the creator's budget of an artifact was, the more glorifying Lincoln's representation would appear<sup>28</sup>. However, on second sight, most objects were hardly classifiable as they exceeded a single media format. For example, movies contain elements of a drama, comedy, and musical and are also distributed via different media, such as movie theaters, television, hard copies, or web streaming. Additionally, TV series that had started on the Web were later adapted by TV networks or changed the distributor, which potentially implies a change of the series' audience as well. A third and most promising approach, in my opinion, is a topical arrangement according to the representations' subjects, i.e., their main assignment according to their potential functions. This not only correlates the most to the theoretical framework and justification of my approach, but also bears the potential of being most beneficial from a scholarly perspective.

Based on the presented framework, it is the main object of this study to show that there is a Lincoln available for everyone in the popular media memory of the twenty-first century and that this plurality can be subdivided into three categories:

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<sup>27</sup> In chapter 2 I will present that a wide range or area of distribution contributes to an artifact's popularity.

<sup>28</sup> For example, movies more than TV shows more than advertisements more than Web comics.

- (1) The Eulogized Lincoln: Tribute to His Lifetime – Great Emancipator, Savior of the Union, Man of the People, Honest Abe
- (2) The Re-Invented Lincoln: Abe In Modern Contexts – Role Model, Representative, and Fighting New Enemies
- (3) The Demystified Lincoln: Object of Ridicule and Deconstruction.

Thus, my findings from taking a perspective on Lincoln in popular media memory agree with aforementioned studies of Schwartz and Peterson attributing to the nineteenth-century statesman an inconsistent image. However, my study counters Schwartz' observations of his later work (2008), in which the sociologist attributed the sixteenth president a “diminishing place in the imagination of ordinary people” (6) and referred to a “post-heroic” era with a decreasing need for heroes in general. I will demonstrate that Lincoln's image as the Great Emancipator is not the only positive leftover feature in popular media memory as the need for heroes and advisers continues to exist.

#### 1.4 Structure

As previously mentioned, it is the objective of the following chapter 2 to provide the fundamental theoretical framework of this study and to explain the coinage of the concept of popular media memory. In the course of this, technical terms, such as differing concepts within social memory studies or views on what is considered popular, will be discussed, defined and prepared for their utilizations within this dissertation. Furthermore, this very section will introduce the objects of study and legitimize their choice by expounding on why these particular popular texts of visual media are ideally suited for this concept, i.e., indicating their potential socially embedded functions and, thereby, allowing interpretations about current attitudes of (groups of) American people towards their former president.

The inclusion of an introductory chapter 3 before the subsequent main analysis seems beneficial for various reasons. By chronologically outlining popular media artifacts that feature Lincoln within the period from his death in 1865 to the turn of the millennium, I am able to link the development of popular media within the same period accordingly. Furthermore, this inter-chapter will help to practically prepare and introduce the reader to my approach and, at the same time, enable me to present the status quo at the turn of the millennium. Additionally, the implication of the time span from 1865 to 1999 serves as a

reference value for the main study as it allows a comparison and, as a consequence thereof, conclusions of what has been forgotten.

Chapter 4 comprises the main analysis of almost 50 Lincolnian representations in popular visual media in the twenty-first century and this section's detailed construction has already been outlined. I reason the specified time limits with two aspects besides the obvious temporal caesura that the turn of the millennium entails *per se*. First, as other scholars' related studies end at the *fin de siècle*, e.g. Schwartz (2008) focuses on Lincoln in the late twentieth century, this allows me to proceed from this date. Second, the choice of covering the years 2000 through 2014 further representations from before, around, and after the mentioned distinctive year of 2009, enabling me to search for specific developments around Lincoln's Bicentennial.

The final chapter 5 of this study provides space for a summary of the results of my study, an explanation of what I was not able to include as well as an outlook on potential future additional studies.

## 2. POPULAR MEDIA MEMORY

It is the goal of this chapter to establish *popular media memory* as a theoretical framework that links the concepts of socially constructed memories and popular media as media of said memories. It serves to justify my approach of considering the analyses of representations of Abraham Lincoln found in popular media as a possible means to gain insight into the American people's various attitudes towards their sixteenth president.

By giving a detailed description of potential functions of representations of Abraham Lincoln, popular media artifacts will be used as a sort of peephole in order to draw conclusions about different attitudes, views, and opinions circulating in media imagery and, indirectly, among the American people. These representations serve as media of socially constructed memories. Hence, I will narrow down the broader concept of socially constructed memories and establish my own notion of “collective memory”, which will then be brought together to my conception of “popular media”. I considered these intermediate steps necessary as I was confronted with manifold definitions of “memory” within memory studies and consider it significant to present my notion of “the popular” in order to defend my choices of popular media within my investigation later on. Hence, by presenting a detailed interface of my understanding of popular media on the one hand and my perception of collective memory on the other, I will be able to justify my installment of the conception of popular media memory as a conflation of both previously defined constructs.

As a first step, I consider it expedient to outline different concepts of socially constructed memories and examine their suitability in order to prove my point that by looking at socially constructed memories we can draw conclusions about attitudes, feelings and views of a group of people. After this detailed discussion, my conception of “collective memory” will be defined and explained. Secondly, I will give a presentation of media of socially constructed memories in order to illustrate where collective memories become apparent and concrete, where we can grasp them. Since I argue that *popular* media perfectly serve as such media of then defined “collective memory”—or “media agents” (following Neiger et al)—it is necessary, as a third step, to elaborate on the concept of “the popular”. This will allow me to delimit the range of objects of investigation, which are available in great numbers within the general media part of culture as this study will reveal. Fourthly, the interface and interconnectivity of popular media on the one hand and my conception of “collective

memory” on the other hand will be illustrated to support the notion that the analysis of representations of Abraham Lincoln in today's popular media offers insight into common thoughts of a nation.

As outlined, I intend to lay the theoretical foundations in this chapter, which will pave the way for the later investigation of potential functions of cultural artifacts in order to work out attitudes towards and utilizations of Abraham Lincoln in today's America. I expect to find a complex field of diverse receptions and I will attempt to derive what these multilayered views of Abraham Lincoln tell us about the multilayered views of the American nation towards their sixteenth president. In order to establish a useful notion, these collective memories that become deducible from analyzing popular media texts for their potential functions will eventually be referred to as “popular media memory”.

## 2.1 Social Memory Studies as a Framework of Medial Representations of Abraham Lincoln

The main objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of different approaches and terms used in studies on socially constructed memory since I see a conceptual lack of clarity. Scholars have been using numerous terms, e.g. “social”, “collective”, “cultural”, “collected”, or “functional memory”, sometimes using different terms for the same or a similar concept and sometimes using the very same term for different concepts. These approaches will be presented, discussed and evaluated by emphasizing their particular relevance to my approach. As a last step, I will present my conception of “collective memory” that I will use within this study as a basis for popular media memory.

In recent years, the subject of memory seems to have been on the agenda of many academic fields (Caldicott and Fuchs, Lipsitz, Sturken, Corcoran). Even though interest in memory studies has had its “ups and downs”, a “memory boom” is taking place at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Radstone 227): many different disciplines have incorporated memory studies into their research, e.g. neurology, psychology, sociology, history, social sciences including political studies, the humanities including media studies and literature, and philosophy (A. Assmann, Erll 2004, Corcoran). Thus, many different disciplines have tried to establish a relation between memory and their particular subjects: memory and remembrance in social theory (Schmidt), memory and history in historical theory (Ben-Amos and

Weisberg), memory and fiction (Sontag), perceptions of memory within the field of anthropology (Feuchtwang), memory and trauma (Radstone 2005), memory and autobiographies (Tileagă), placing journalism inside memory studies (Kitch), putting memory in relation to political communication (Corcoran), just to give a few examples.<sup>29</sup>

Memory Studies is also an international field of studies (A. Assmann 2004, 45). Taking a look at the book market and articles in magazines such as *Memory Studies* confirms this impression as there have been publications from scholars from all over the globe.<sup>30</sup> And the field of memory studies benefits from its internationality; Aleida Assmann emphasizes that there have been different international approaches, e.g. stating that the French explore the topic rather from within than from the fringe, as US-American approaches tend to do (45ff.). To my notion, this internationality strengthens my approach from an arguably German perspective on an, in most parts, US topic.

Most of the current research into the field of memory has shown that recent concepts are frequently based on four main approaches that were developed in the preceding century: Maurice Halbwachs' "collective memory" and Aby Warburg's idea of "pathos formulae" of the 1920s, as well as Jan and Aleida Assmann's concept of "cultural" and "communicative memory" and Pierre Nora's notions of "sites of memory / lieux de mémoire" of the 1980s. A brief review on and examination of the usefulness of these four positions for my project will help to explain current concepts, which will be dealt with afterwards.

### 2.1.1 Basic Concepts of Social Memory Studies: Halbwachs, Warburg, Assmann, and Nora

As a student of the philosopher Henri Bergson and sociologist Émile Durkheim, Maurice Halbwachs enhanced and combined their thoughts on memory and developed the expression "collective memory" in the 1920s to 1940s<sup>31</sup>. In his books *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925), *La Topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte* (1941), and *La mémoire collective* (1950) he elaborates on three main ideas: the social construction of individual

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<sup>29</sup> There has also been a debate if a transdisciplinary approach is possible, see Assmann 2008; Erll 2004, 2005; and A.D. Brown.

<sup>30</sup> Both Assmann and Erll are German, Olick and Schwartz representing the U.S., Esposito was born in Milan, Italy, Corcoran comes from Ireland.

<sup>31</sup> Neiger et al. (2011) argue that it had actually been Hugo Van Hofmannsthal who invented the term back in 1902 but also concede that it was Halbwachs who gave the term a decent push (2).



memory, the development of a collective memory in intermediary groups, and collective memory at the level of entire societies and civilizations (Marcel and Mucchielli). According to Halbwachs, collective memory is both socially and individually embedded, based on communication and oral tradition, and strongly connected to the present. First, individual memory interacts with collective memory since “it is in society that people normally acquire their [individual] memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Lewis 38). Thus, it can be stated that individual memory is socially conditioned and constructed. Second, these memories are stabilized by communication as interpretations of the social world are communicated among individuals (Heinrich, particularly chapter 2.5 “*Erinnerungsreproduktion versus – rekonstruktion*”). Without a social environment that includes communication, according to Halbwachs, a completely lonely person cannot form a memory (J. Assmann 2007, 35ff.). Third, collective memory is dependent on present circumstances: “collective memory adjusts to, and shapes, a system of present-day beliefs” (Halbwachs qtd. in Ben-Amos and Weisberg, 15) and, therefore, “seems to answer [current] expectations” (14). In short, collective memory emerges through the communication of individuals in a social group, which shapes a shared memory based on present needs. In contrast to Halbwachs' concept, this study explicitly focuses on the role that media plays within the field of communication as the recent advancements of (electronic) media support the possibilities of communicating individual thoughts to and interact with social groups.

Generally, Halbwachs' perceptions are helpful to support the idea of this thesis to investigate today's popular media culture as a means of communication to identify different attitudes towards Abraham Lincoln: by investigating today's representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media I want to gain insight into a “collective memory” that emerges from communication, that colludes between individuals and society in general, and thereby links a picture of the past with present needs. Altogether, Halbwachs' concept of “*mémoire collective*” is very useful and, as will be shown, most features will be borrowed for my approach.

Another scholar of the early twentieth century who did important pioneer work, especially in terms of media of memory, was art historian *Aby Warburg*. He developed the concept of the “mediality of memory” (Erl 2008, 9) in his work *Mnemosyne* (1924-28, unfinished) using the term “*pathos formulae*” (9). Warburg was interested in the mnemonic energy of cultural

artifacts and stated that cultural engrams store mnemonic energy that is discharged in different contexts. Here, cultural symbols serve as a sort of cultural energy reserve that can trigger memories in different contexts, and memory is understood “as a retrospective imagining [that] involves the story as a basic mnemoic act” (LeGoff qtd. in Caldicott, 15). In contrast to Halbwachs, who offers a theory of memory embedded in social dimension, Warburg does not put forth a theoretical concept but rather works inductively, i.e. with artifacts (Erll 2005, 21).

Even though Warburg does not present a ready-made conception of social memory, he nevertheless offers some helpful arguments in connection to my project. The idea that cultural artifacts are loaded with mnemonic energy that is discharged in different contexts, thereby mediating between past and present, is helpful in order to gain insights into contemporary shared memories (Erll 2005, 19ff.) and their potential functions in particular. By analyzing which mnemonic energy today's representations of Lincoln in popular media offer, it can be deduced which potential functions certain kinds of representations have. Mnemonic energy can then be regarded as the characteristics and potential functions that representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media hold per se from a historical perspective. Hence, this concept will be discussed in detail when embedded in the upcoming chapter 2.5 (“Mediality of Social Memory”).

The interest in the subject of memory studies ebbed during and after the Second World War. It was not until the eighties of the last century that attention rekindled with the research of Assmann and Nora.

Jan and Aleida Assmann refined Maurice Halbwachs' concept of “collective memory” further by introducing a differentiation between “cultural” and “communicative memory”<sup>32</sup>. In doing so, they wanted to emphasize the cultural sphere, which had been excluded by Halbwachs. On the one hand, Jan and Aleida Assmann consider “cultural memory” as the “outer dimension of human memory”, as a way “to create a shared past within a community by providing a collective historical consciousness [i.e. identity] among its members” (J. Assmann 2008, 112). It reflects socially constructed normative and formative versions of the past (Erll 2005, 156), refers to a “mythical history” (J. Assmann 2008, 117), and has an institutional character. It is communicated through recitation and practices and maintained

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<sup>32</sup> They did not delete the notion of 'collective memory' without replacement but split this term into “communicative” and “cultural memory”, with “cultural memory” being their new coinage and “communicative memory” replacing “collective memory”.

through cultural formations such as texts, rites, and monuments (Caldicott, 16). Thus, it is fixed; far from everyday culture; about an absolute, far away past; and is passed on by specialists. On the other hand, Jan and Aleida Assmann introduced the distinguishing concept of “communicative memory”, which is based on Halbwachs' original notion of “collective memory”. In contrast to “cultural memory”, “communicative memory” refers to informal traditions and genres of everyday communication of the recent past (within three to four interacting generations) and is communicated within everyday interaction and communication (J. Assmann 2008, 117). Assmann's also refers to “communicative memory” as “living” and “working memor[y]” and associates it to “communication in vernacular language”.

In my opinion, communication can then take place directly between individuals but also through different media. No specialists or institutions are needed, its contents are not fixed and formalized but open. Assmann also refers to “communicate memory” as “everyday memory” (Assmann and Czaplicka, 126). I consider especially this feature of the “everyday” important in regard to the upcoming presentation of the interface of “collective memory” and “popular media”.

Table 1

Collective Memory according to Assmann

	Communicative Memory	Cultural Memory
Content	History in the frame of autobiographical memory, recent past	Mythical history, events in absolute past (“in illo tempore”)
Forms	Informal traditions and genres of everyday communication	High degree of formation, ceremonial communication
Media	Living, embodied memory, communication in vernacular language	Mediated in texts, icons, dances, rituals, and performances of various kinds; “classical” or otherwise formalized language(s)
Time Structure	80-100 years, a moving horizon of 3-4 interacting generations	Absolute past, mythical primordial time, “3000 years”
Participation Structure	Diffuse	Specialized carriers of memory, hierarchically structured

Source: Jan Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory”, *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008) 117. Print.

Although Jan and Aleida Assmann's main research has been on “cultural memory”, their development of the by-concept of “communicative memory”<sup>33</sup> seems to meet all the characteristics of the objects of investigation of this thesis: representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media can be produced and used by everyone, *they* are circulated within everyday communication and are not fixed. The only feature that seems contrary and does not correspond is that Abraham Lincoln himself died one and a half centuries ago, thus, his original image is not within the specified time frame of 80-100 years (117) and can therefore not be passed on as part of oral history. However, my approach is not dependent on the transmission in form of oral history, which is based “exclusively on memories gained in oral interviews” (113). To my mind, this characteristic can be adjusted to my needs and the time frame could be expanded due to the ever-present and “larger-than-life” status of the president from Illinois. Representations of Abraham Lincoln today can be subdivided according to Assmann's categories. Monuments, official ceremonies, official biographies written by experts – these are contents of a “cultural memory”; everyday representations in today's popular media, such as cartoons, websites, TV shows, or magazines are still part of everyday communication and NOT “characterized by its distance from the everyday” (129), even though contemporary witnesses are not available anymore. Though arguably touching slightly the Assmann notion of “cultural memory” in the form of competing with official references, I see my objects of investigation, i.e. Lincoln's representations in popular media, belonging to, speaking in Assmann's terms, rather “communicative” than “cultural memory”.

Jan and Aleida Assmann's breakdown of Halbwachs' “collective memory” into “communicative” and “cultural memory” is very useful for my approach since particularly their definition of “communicative memory” offers attributes my project focuses on – representation of Abraham Lincoln being communicated in popular media with no specialized and hierarchically structured carriers. Hence, features of this subdivision will be adapted to my notion of “collective memory”

Beside Jan and Aleida Assmann, *Pierre Nora* also worked on modifying Halbwach's basic concept of “collective memory”. He introduced the notion of “places of memory” (sometimes translated “sites” or “realms of memory”, from orig. French: “lieux de mémoire”) that was to

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<sup>33</sup> Their notion of “communicative memory” basically refers to Halbwachs' “*mémoire collective*” and rather serves as a term of dissociation to “cultural memory”.

replace “collective memory”. According to Nora, places of memory now form the basis of the French national memory and construction of identity (Radstone 2000) and thereby replace terms like “history” or “memory”: “a constructed [and artificial] history replaces a true memory” (Holtorf, 4), whereas it may be at least doubted if there is such thing as a “true” memory.<sup>34</sup> They are ideological mnemotechnical devices (den Boer, 28) and since the “real” environment of the past (*milieux de mémoire*) does not exist anymore, places of memory are constructed and serve as places where present-day “memory crystallizes” (Nora 7). Within this construct, Nora distinguishes between a first degree understanding, the understanding of original history, and a second degree understanding which he connects to present-day retrospective sentimental interests (Corcoran 2004, 95). Places of memory can be almost everything, e.g. sites, buildings, artifacts, texts, symbols, activities (Erl 2005, 23), but also geographical regions, monuments, anniversaries, and cemeteries (Corcoran 2004, 95). Just as Jan and Aleida Assmann, he uses two different concepts in order to refer to either the past (history, first understanding, “cultural memory”) or current interest (second degree understanding, “collective memory”).

Nora's notion of “places of memory” is very suitable for my idea of linking popular media with socially constructed memories. From his idea that so many different items can serve as “memory crystallizers” I deduce that as many items could potentially serve as media of a socially constructed memory and, eventually, of the basic concept of my notions of popular media memory. As Nora cites “the revolutionary calendar” and “Tour de la France par deux enfants” (14) as examples that once had been part of the French collective memory and later reentered the collective memory in a different form, I transfer this idea to my approach. It justifies my investigation of representations of a historical figure from which I draw conclusions about the present. For example, a Lincoln stovepipe hat used in present-day context bears potential of working as a crystallizer of memories, possessing a triggering function in a current setting.

Four different concepts have been presented that, to my mind, provide a basis for further studies on socially constructed memory. Maurice Halbwachs' concept of a “collective memory” shows that there is a shared social memory of a group that refers to present needs and is interdependent with individual memories and their communication. Jan and Aleida

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<sup>34</sup> Nora uses the term “real memory” as well (8)

Assmann split this “collective memory” into “cultural” and “communicative memory”. By doing so, they offer a basis for the intention of this project, namely analyzing popular media as a means of communication of a society to explore the various present attitudes and feelings towards Abraham Lincoln. Warburg's and Nora's concepts of “*pathos formulae*” and “sites of memories” respectively will become more important when linked to the mediality of collective memory later on, but it can already be stated that the basic idea of (artificially constructed) places of memory, especially with regard to Nora's second-degree understanding of present-day interests, could serve as a basis and function as a useful tool for this thesis: popular media could then serve as places of memory expressing people's current interests by looking at representations of a historical figure in modern times. Even though both concepts were originally associated with and focused on “history” and “cultural memory”, they are now linked to “the mediality of collective memory” within my approach.

In the following, more recent concepts that support, argue against, or enhance the presented notions will be discussed and examined for their suitability for an analysis of the role and functions of popular media artifacts in shaping the place of Abraham Lincoln in contemporary culture.

### 2.1.2 Recent Concepts and Debates

I will now focus on recent concepts and current developments of ideas closely connected to studies dealing with socially constructed memories, starting with debates on the term “memory” itself. For reasons of clarity and comprehensibility, the following overview is then divided into the researchers' respective adoption of the terms “cultural”, “collective”, and “social memory”. This overview of recent debates is done to emphasize the diversity and ambiguity of the terminology in this field and it will help to bring out my eventual notions of “collective memory” and popular media memory respectively more clearly.

Not only have the concepts presented above been criticized, enriched, or substituted with other, more recent terms—even the most basic expression of all, “memory”, has become the subject of criticism. Marita Sturken, for example, has argued that the term “memory” is overused, ambiguous, and too frequently employed as a synonym to soften 'history' (76; Klein 129). Siegfried J. Schmidt joins her by pointing out that crucial concepts, such as “memory”,

are too vague and normative (191). Although Erll describes “memory” as a “catch-all category” (Erll 2005, 5), but she, on the contrary, rightly sees some benefit in it. And so does Jens Brockmeier, who states that “memory” is a name “for open, dynamic and fleeting fields of new explorations and theoretical experiments” (13), thereby correctly arguing that it does not necessarily need one clear cut definition. This is exactly where I position myself as I focus on an outline of the collective character of such memories.

### *Cultural Memory*

Edric Caldicott and Anne Fuchs expanded Assmann's idea of splitting “collective memory” into two aspects. They introduced an enhanced conception of “cultural memory” (15) and removed it from Jan and Aleida Assmann's connotations of “heritage”, i.e. the obligation to remember “a particular tradition”, thereby putting it properly into a beneficent perspective and discarding the associations with the term that made it impracticable for this very project. According to Caldicott and Fuchs, today, “cultural memory” is diversified, meaning that it can be used by everyone because it “involves a retrospective imaging that simultaneously articulates, questions and investigates the normative self-image of a group” (18). Thus, their definition of “cultural memory” is much more useful for this thesis. They also redesigned the other term used by Assmann, “communicative memory”, and replaced it by “postmemory” because of the loss of first-hand witnesses (20). Like Marianne Hirsch (118ff.) they rightly state that “postmemory” is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation” (20).

This further developed concept of “cultural memory” is perfectly beneficial to me because it eliminates the associations that seemed impracticable for my approach and sees a transfer through creation. This is highly relevant with due regard to my linkage with popular media artifacts and, as a result, underlines and encourages my intention of connecting mediated representations of the sixteenth presidents of the United States of America that link a past figure with present thoughts.

Marita Sturken also modifies the concept of “cultural memory” and justly calls for an understanding that “implies not only that memories are often produced and reproduced through cultural forms, but also the kind of circulation that exists between personal and

cultural memories” (74), shifting the emphasis to an interplay of personal and public memory. In her essay “Memory, Consumerism and Media: Reflections on the Emergence of the Field” she highlights the concept of “memory practices”, which is “an activity that engages with, produces, reproduces and invests meaning in memories, whether personal, cultural or collective” (74). With this emphasis on practices, rather than on objects (Assmann) or sites of memory (Nora), the constructed nature of memories is highlighted (74ff.). In my view, this serves as a strong connector to popular media since, as I will argue, representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media can be mooted by everyone—thereby constructing, maintaining, or directing my notion of “collective memory”.

In 2004, Aleida Assmann introduced a further differentiation of the concept of “cultural memory”; one of the reasons for this was that she considered it overused (A. Assmann 2004, 45). Her subdivision of “cultural memory” into “storage memory” (*Speichergedächtnis*) on the one hand and “functional memory” (*Funktionsgedächtnis*) on the other was not totally new (Both Jan and Aleida Assmann had been using the concept of “ars/vis” before), but it served her purpose to help sharpen the methodical potential of the concept of “cultural memory” and point to its dynamical character. “Storage memory” serves as a “place” where things can be stored, saved, preserved, and ordered, no matter whether they are currently needed. It is not evaluated and can be described as the passive memory of a society. In contrast, “functional memory” describes the active memory of a social group. Things can find their way from “storage” to “functional memory”, depending on their current relevance. Just like the autobiographical memory of an individual shapes his or her identity, functional memory supports the identity of a group. What is found here “is entitled to be quoted, exhibited, analyzed” (Assmann, 2004, 18, my translation) frequently, making the past vivid and present. Thus, the “functional memory” of a group is limited to a small relevant selection and things might become forgotten, i.e. be put back to storage memory.

Here, particularly Assmann's concept of “functional memory” is of great interest when linked to the basic idea of this thesis. Hence, representations of Abraham Lincoln “quoted and exhibited” in today's popular media can subsequently be considered media of Assmann's “functional memory” as they are obviously in use and active. Even though Jan and Aleida Assmann's conception of “cultural memory” has been considered mostly unavailing for my approach, their further division into “storage” and “functional memory” allows the, at least



partly, adaption of the latter concept if adjusted and refined for my purposes. My following notion of “Collective memory”, then, unites the characteristics of “functional memory”: it refers to the active memory of a social group, in my case the collective memory that will be analyzed within the field of popular media. And the same rule applies for the media: being popular means being active.

### *Collective Memory*

Not only has the term “cultural memory” been subject to discussion, but so has the concept of “collective memory”. Erll, for example, uses “collective memory” as a general term and works with a provisional but at the same time integrating definition: for her, “collective memory” is “the interplay of present and past in a socio-cultural context“ (2008, 2). This definition allows coverage of individual acts of remembering, national memory, and transnational lieux de memoire (2ff.), thereby even subsuming Nora's concept. Erll argues that collective memories become distinct in “cultures of remembrance” (“*Erinnerungskulturen*”) (Erll 2005).

Other scholars adopt the exemplified basic ideas and just place their emphases differently. Barry Schwartz states that “collective memory” “refers to the distribution throughout society of what individuals believe, feel, and know about the past” (Schwartz 2008, 11), taking up the above-mentioned interplays between the individual and society as well as present and past. At the same time he breaks down the concept into three levels: a formal, popular, and informal level. Especially his mention of the popular level supports my approach of linking popular media with socially constructed memories. By “popular” Schwartz means “magazines, newspapers, television, and film” (Schwartz 2016). This threefold differentiation roughly reflects the described concepts of “cultural memory” (formal - according to Assmann), “collective memory” (popular – my approach which will serve as a basis for “popular media memory”), and “communicative memory” (informal – conversations).

Whereas Erll and Schwartz use “collective memory” as a rather general term, there are also scholars who have not only altered existing concepts but rather created new terms and notions. Jeffrey K. Olick, for example, contrasts the idea of “collected memory” to “collective memory” (in Erll 2005, 99), thereby taking up James E. Young's concept. According to Olick, “collective memory” describes symbols, media, and institutions through which society refers

to the past. In this context, the “memory” of collective memory is used metaphorically, whereas culture is seen as a phenomenon of memory (“*Kultur als Gedächtnisphänomen*”, Erll 2005, 98 and 123). Media and institutions establish a “memory” of a social community. “Collected memory”, on the other hand, describes the individual memory shaped by social and cultural circumstances and serves as a metaphor of gathering and collecting. It is contrarily labeled “memory as a cultural phenomenon” (“*Gedächtnis als Kulturphänomen*”, Erll 2005, 98). Olick further concludes that collected and collective memory can be separated for the purpose of analysis indeed, but both operate together and influence each other (99). Here, mediated representations of Abraham Lincoln, as part of Olick's “collective memory”, establish and shape certain “collected” views about Abraham Lincoln. I argue the other way around, that the “collected memories”, then, have influence on the “collective memory” as well, since individuals also have access to popular media as will be explained later on.

Another concept was introduced by Horst-Alfred Heinrich at the turn of the millennium. He criticizes Assmann for separating individuals (communicative memory) and society (cultural memory) too strictly and introduces a “micro-macro-model” (“*Mikro-Makro-Model*”, Heinrich 2000, 2002). He rightly states that there are many collective memories within a society and that they can be inconsistent and varying among different social groups and it is possible that certain events are not remembered autobiographically but in a collective way. This supports my line of argumentation concerning my notion of collective memory that even though there are no contemporary witnesses of Abraham Lincoln, he can be remembered collectively within various groups of communicating individuals. What has been defined as cultural memory, an “*institution*” that becomes visible in pictures, symbols, rituals and is stored in archives, libraries, or monuments (2002, chapter 2.4), is allocated to the macro-level of his concept and the collective memory, i.e., the intersection of individual memories, is rather allocated to the micro-level. His approach takes up Coleman's critique that the research into the relation between individuals and society within the social sciences is underrepresented and calls attention to the reciprocity of both levels. Within cultural memory, individuals can decide what to choose from the archive (compare storage/functional memory), which interpretation of the past to follow. Within collective memory, communication is the means to exchange personal views on memories with other members of a group and eventually agree on a collective memory. Accordingly, collective memory can be either part of the micro-level, if linked to a remembering person recalling the past as a member of a

group, or part of the macro-level, if it refers to norms, evaluations, or opinions of a whole group. Most importantly, both levels influence each other. By criticizing Assmann for his too strict separation of the individual (communicative) and cultural (ceremonies, etc.), Heinrich makes clear that it is not a question of *either* cultural *or* communicative memory. We are dealing with an interwoven net of numerous memories, whereas the “cultural” part influences the “collective” (or “micro” influences “macro”) or vice versa. Using the example of Abraham Lincoln this means that the perception of official or classical cultural memories, as for example the Lincoln Memorial, obviously have an effect on each individual, therefore influencing “collective memory” too.

In support of this thesis it is sufficient to determine *this*, since “collective memory” can be linked to both levels of Heinrich's model. The bottom line is that his model supports the idea of a socially constructed memory that is strongly based on interaction between individuals and society. I am aware of the fact that cultural memory co-exists, but I consider it negligible within the scope of this thesis because of previously defined approach and emphasis.

Aleida Assmann doubts if the term “collective memory” should be used at all, asking if it is only a “mystification” (A. Assmann 2008, 187). She refers to Susan Sontag, who claims that there is no such thing as a collective memory (187) because, amongst other arguments, no memory can be without an organic basis. But Assmann refutes this view and concludes that collective memories exist, even though they might not exist per se but are created by means of symbolic media and communication. For this reason, my study will only refer to potential functions of different media and not claim that it can cover all aspects and areas of memory as such.

### *Social Memory*

Another term that has frequently been used in connection with memory and society is “social memory”. In his abstract “Memory and Remembrance – A Constructivist Approach”, Siegfried J. Schmidt expresses his understanding of social memory as “operative fiction” (Zierold qtd. in Schmidt, 196) and states that social memory is neither located at a certain place, nor completely located in a particular individual. It reveals itself through its application by social actors (196ff.), thereby supporting the above-mentioned condition of communication. And unlike Erll, who considers “cultural memory” an umbrella term and uses

“social memory” as an heuristic tool to describe the “starting point in social studies” (Erl 2008, 4), I am using the term according to Olick, who defines “social memory” as an umbrella term itself under which different forms of memories (from autobiographical to cultural memory) can be subsumed (Olick in Heinrich 2002, 36ff.).

### *Common Features*

The preceding presentation of various concepts of socially constructed memories has indeed shown that there are different views concerning the exact definitions or usage of terms. In my opinion, the discussion has also revealed similarities that appear in most concepts: the relationship and reciprocity of individuals and society; the connection of present and past; the idea of (re-)producing memories, partly through everyday communication; and the topic of the (re-)construction of identity *through acts of remembrance*. I am aware of the fact that a relationship of social memory to “older terms”, such as “history”, “remembering”, “forgetting”, or “tradition” is also a highly controversial topic. Nevertheless, a detailed investigation seems to go beyond the basic scope of this section since it is my aim to focus on current debates on studies on socially constructed memories in order to emphasize my position.<sup>35</sup>

Following this exposition, I take it for granted that individual memory is closely related to the relationship of individuals to other individuals, i.e. society. Individual memories shared within a social group can then be referred to as collective memories. Individuals can be members of different social groups and, therefore, collective memories about the same basic topic can be expected to be diverse. Collective memories cannot only arise from personal to public but also vice versa: if accepted, individual memories can be shaped by imposed or “outer” memories as well, supporting the above-mentioned argument of an interwoven net with memories of a group, or in this case imposed memories of media, becoming part of individual memories and the other way around. On the other hand, both individuals and groups can reject memories of the other part, because of which I only argue of potential functions that I wish to demonstrate.

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<sup>35</sup> A few references on memory in relation to: “remembering”: Schmidt 2008, Brockmeier; “forgetting”: Connerton 2008, Esposito in Erl 2008; “history”: Weissberg; Radstone (2000) on relationship of history/tradition/past to fantasy/invention/present.

These thoughts broaden the scope of my analysis as they suggest two areas of investigation, namely productions of representations of Abraham Lincoln of individuals as well as those of media institutions, both of which can become part of a social memory, and, as in my case, popular media memory.

Another feature of social memory is its function of linking past and present. But what is its main purpose? Is a social memory rather reflecting the past as it was or is it adjusted to present needs? Whereas Edric Caldicott and Anne Fuchs place memory in the in-between of the present and the past and Farrell Corcoran even sees today's emphasis of social memory rather on the future than on the past, I concur with the assumption<sup>36</sup> that social memories are always influenced by present needs: Kuhn has rightly pointed out that the “past is always mediated, rewritten, revised through memory” (Kuhn) so it is just not possible to refer to a memory that is not affected by present needs (Mead in Heinrich 49-51). Olick and Schwartz agree with this view by arguing that social groups construct a shared past and adapt it to present needs (Olick in Erll, Schwartz 2000). This construction of memories also implies that memory is already a second revision of a past event (Kuhn), which means that “traces of the past that remain in the present [are used] as raw material in the production of new stories about the past” (Radstone 2000, 186). This last argument underlines my argumentation as it emphasizes the possibility and necessity of analyzing representations of a historical figure, that is Abraham Lincoln, in a contemporary context, which allows me to draw conclusions about today's collective memory and, hence, society's beliefs, attitudes, and concerns in general. Thinking further, my notion of popular media memory might also be referred to as a sort of “national memory” because mainly US-American material will be objects of investigation. At least, this is what I aim at when offering potential functions of said representations.

In this regard, Assmann's notion of “communicative memory” as well as the outlined concepts of Caldicott and Fuchs as well as Heinrich highlight the connection with everyday communication with everyone being able to participate (unlike cultural memory's concept of official bearers). Since my concept of “collective memory” will be closely connected to popular media, it is simultaneously strongly bonded to everyday communication as will be related later on, especially in regard to the selection of material.

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<sup>36</sup> See also: Schwartz 1991; Weissberg; Erll 2004, 2005; Echterhoff.

Another result of the discussion on socially constructed memory is that it is closely associated with the ability to shape identity. This construction of a shared identity of a group represents one of the major functions of “social memory”, just like the forming of a self-image of a group, as outlined by Caldicott, and needs to be taken into account when exploring today's role of Abraham Lincoln in American society later in this study. Especially “cultural memory” is frequently described as a means to form and edit a group-shared identity<sup>37</sup>. Caldicott, for example, states that “cultural memory can be understood as a repertoire . . . through which communities advance and edit competing identities” (18). Here, he stresses that there can be several collective identities that compete with each other, which underlies the favorable aspect of diversity in connection with Lincoln's representations and their respective potential views. In this regard, I only aim to present potential functions and am aware that some people are in favor of different kinds of interpretations.

Furthermore, Jan Assmann notes that “cultural memory . . . conveys to . . . people a collective, that is, cultural identity” (2008, 110). As I have outlined, there is arguably not one detectable national identity of the American people; however, his approach underlines that my idea of popular media memory might reveal identity-establishing features for present day Americans.

Assmann equates “collective” with “cultural identity”, so we can adopt his conclusions to our conception. As I will elaborate later on, I will use both concepts differently. But what can be captured at this moment is that the emergence of (various) collectively shared identities can be connected and attributed to representations of Abraham Lincoln within different groups – popular media artifacts have the potential of creating and directing social identities of different groups, which will in particular apply to positive representations of the former president to be discussed.

#### *Conclusion: My Notion of “Collective Memory” as a Basis for Popular Media Memory*

Various conceptualizations of social memories have been presented. In concordance with Olick, I will subsequently use the term “social memory” as a superordinate concept that generally refers to any kind of socially emerged memory among people. “Collective memory”, however, will be used as the term that describes the specific sort of social memory

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<sup>37</sup> There are different terms in use: “public identity” (Kunow), “national identity” (Caldicott), “group identity” (Heinrich), or “collective identity” (A Assmann).

that I wish to analyze. I will summarize which of the above-mentioned concepts seem beneficial for my purpose and exclude ideas that are contrary to my undertaking, such as features like reciprocity of individuals and groups, communication, and relevancy to present needs.

As already mentioned, the features of the “*mémoire collective*” introduced by Halbwachs are still valid and shall be integrated in my approach. The part of collective memory that Assmann later called “cultural memory” is not of relevance to my concept because, as aforementioned, it refers to a very formal, “mythical history” about the past and needs “specialized carriers” (J. Assmann 2008, 117). However, the focus of everyday communication makes Jan and Aleida Assmann's concept of “communicative memory” appealing. Caldicott's later coinage of “postmemory” is helpful in overcoming Assmann's condition of eye-witness-testimony within “communicative memory”. Aleida Assmann's introduction of “storage” and “functional memory” is useful for my emphasis on the functional aspect of active, recent, and vivid memory.

Hence, my interest is in the collective memory that refers to a shared memory among a social group and that emerges from the interplay of individuals and their social environment. It relies on communication and can be initiated and shaped by everyone. It refers to the past, present, and future since the past is “unavoidably rewritten, revised” (Kuhn 12) through memories that are always influenced by present needs or desires for the future. That makes collective memories vivid and socially relevant, especially in terms of the emergence and maintenance of *national/collective* identity. It can also refer to a past that cannot be referred to by eyewitnesses as memories can be adopted and transferred. There can be several collective memories on the same subject within a nation. They differ from “cultural memory” or “storage memory” insofar as they do not need official bearers and are neither passive nor archived. Hence, Lincoln as part of a modern TV series can be observed differently; he is actively involved in new context and offers possibilities to immerse oneself, to connect him with recent topics and to consider him a guide for the future. This will be mirrored in my implementation of the categories of function when it comes to analyzing text in chapter 4, with “the Eulogizing” and “the Re-invented Lincoln” in particular.

Even though the feature of creating a social identity has been mainly attributed to “cultural memory”, I argue that “collective memory” has the same capability. Hence, “cultural identity”

differs from “collective identity” in the same way that “cultural memory” differs from “collective memory”. This means that identities emerging out of “collective memory” are rather subject to change, diverse, emerging in the present, and thereby reflecting present thoughts instead of “cultural identities” that were established in the past and have been rather officially passed on thenceforward.

From this it follows that I will henceforth use the term “collective memory” as a provisional working term that shall pave the way to my eventual goal of establishing the concept of popular media memory. It stands for the term “memory” within this construct. Whenever I refer to the term “collective memory” in the further course of this study, I refer towards my understanding of its schemata and features, separating it from other scholars’ particular definition of the same term and other specific notions as, for instance, “cultural memory”. As already mentioned, I will treat “social memory” as an umbrella term.

In the following, I will specify where this collective memory appears, where it becomes concrete, i.e. I will illustrate which types of material can serve as media of collective memory. Afterwards, an interface will outline why the analysis of representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media is a good means in order to draw conclusions about the nature of collective memory, which will help explore which present functions these representations have. And this will lead to the eventual introduction of *popular media memory*.

### 2.1.3 *Media of Social Memory / The Mediality of Social Memory*

*Collective memory is not possible without media*

*Astrid Erll*

After having outlined my notion of collective memory in order to present my understanding of the type of socially constructed memory this study focuses on, I will now lead over to the mediality of this collective memory. This means I will explore the areas in which collective memory becomes graspable and visible (in vehicles, so to say) in order to prepare a selection of material that to be investigated to draw conclusions about collective memory

As I have already pointed out, it is the eventual goal of this thesis to analyze representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media with regard to their potential functions



in order to draw conclusions about collective memories that exist in communities in the United States today. In this chapter I will continue on providing the theoretical basis for this undertaking and, in this connection, I will demonstrate three points. First, I will present a general and widespread notion of media of social memory. As a next step, I will narrow down this broad concept and eventually establish, with the help of the narrow concept of “media of collective memory”, a two-dimensional model of collective memory as I argue that collective memory emerges in the interplay of a “material dimension” and a “social dimension” (Schmidt, Erll). Within this second step, I will implement a mass-medial approach that suits the material analyzed in this study. Third, I will demonstrate what general functions these material mass-media of collective memory have. This theoretical framework will provide the basis for my analysis of popular media representations of Abraham Lincoln as media of collective memories.

#### *Widespread and General Approach of Media of Social Memory*

Media of social memories are generally considered carriers “of what is to be remembered” (Erll 2004, 12ff. my translation). As a consequence, media or carrier of collective memories can be almost everything, i.e. both material and immaterial things can serve as media of social memories.

The aforementioned concept of “places of memory” by Pierre Nora illustrates this position. According to Nora, “places of memory”, as carriers of a shared memory, can be material objects, such as texts, artifacts, or monuments; but also immaterial concepts, such as geographical regions, anniversaries, or cemeteries (Corcoran). At first sight, his concept seems to contradict my approach since it challenges the basic existence of collective memories. It sets “places of memory” as “artificial placeholders” (Erll 2005, my translation) instead, thereby replacing one concept with the other. But even though Nora discards the term “media”, his approach nevertheless offers several devices that are useful for my study: “places of memory” can be artificially constructed places where present day memory “crystallizes” (Nora 7), i.e. where memories are deliberately recalled. Particularly the second degree understanding of “places of memory” is closely linked to popular culture (Corcoran 2002); individuals make a selection of different offered places. And there is a material dimension too, which can become a promising subject of analysis within this concept (Erll 2005). Even though his approach uses neither the term “collective memory” nor “media”, it

makes use of a material dimension, where memory crystallizes, that I link to collective memory. Hence, in my view, “places of memory” serve as media of collective memory, and popular media artifacts could then serve as places of memory within his approach. Since Nora explicitly excludes archaeological sites of an absolute past, his approach refrains from the Assmann's definition of “cultural memory” as well and makes his parts of his definition of “places of memory” workable for my study, although not the whole concept itself.

In addition, other scholars support the *modus operandi* of using media of social memories in rather general terms: Rüdiger Kunow locates memory in material and immaterial ways and cites as examples ritual phrases, customary practices, regions that people feel connected to (homeland), as well as sites (*lieux de memoire*). Brockmeier also states that it is “not only cultural artifacts but also architectures and geography in which memory is embodied” (12) and Sturken mentions memorials as bearers of memories. Erll and a research group of the University of Gießen, Germany, have established the concept of memorial cultures (*Erinnerungskulturen*) and particularly call attention to the plurality of cultural memories. Within their groups there have been studies on different media of memory, e.g., gardens (Oesterle and Tausch, Ananieva), architecture (Martini), prince's palaces (Fey et. al.) and prints (Danelzik-Brüggemann). Other scholars focus on the materiality of media of collective memories. Besides the previously mentioned, photographs (Kuhn, Sturken); literature (Lachmann, Erll); popular culture; and mass media (Lipsitz), such as television (Corcoran), also films and the Internet have been considered media of collective memories (Meyers et. al.).

As an interim conclusion, I claim that media of social memory are manifold. All of the above described concepts contain the idea of both material and immaterial bearers of collective memories. Within this thesis, representations of Abraham Lincoln that can be found in popular media will be examined. From this it follows that my media focus will be on the material level. From this point onwards, I will refrain from the introduced widespread media approach and limit my area of study to material texts and artifacts to be found in media of communication. A further, more explicit limitation to popular media will be undertaken later on.

### *The Two-dimensional Model of Collective Memory*

I conclude that media of collective memories only serve as carriers of memories, or “vehicles” (2 ff.) as Nikosz puts it. They are not memories themselves. Further, I deduce that collective memories are not readymade, not graspable. Media of collective memory offer something to share. But where exactly then are the collective memories to be found? Where can we see them? In order to illustrate where collective memories emerge and become concrete and graspable, I introduce a two-dimensional framework that is based on Siegfried J. Schmidt's (*Kalte Faszination*) and Astrid Erll's (*Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*) compact concepts of a medium of collective memories: collective memories emerge in an interplay of the material and social dimensions of memory.

The *material dimension* is the most apparent part of a collective memory. Here,

*collective memories become concrete and observable in the form of different media.*

Following Posner's model of the three dimensions of culture (1991), media of collective memory makes up the material dimension of collective memory. As this dimension can consist of every kind of media-related forms of expression, particularly products of everyday life and popular culture, it is highly relevant for my purposes. In her work (2005) Erll particularizes the relevance of media in connection with cultural and collective memory. She assigns the material dimension three components that can be analyzed: media as communication tools to externalize relevant memory information, media technologies that distribute and establish memory contents, and cultural objectifications as concrete offers of media of memory and their formation. With her model, she sticks closely to Schmidt, who states that media integrate four dimensions: communication instruments, technological devices, the social dimensions of such devices, and concrete media offers (197). Their division helps pave the way for my practical approach as concrete popular media offers, such as cartoons, movies, or comics, will be examined in this study. The division also shows that it is important to consider the relationship of the material to its embedding, as it can “only be interpreted in the context of [its] production” (198), that is of its “socio-cultural environment”. As a consequence, I will include, whenever possible, a focus on the context of production in the analysis of popular artifacts. Generally speaking, this seems fairly

interesting as old features and characteristics will be embedded in different present environments.

Aby Warburg's notion of “pathos formulae” helps me in the study of material objects as well. As previously outlined, he considers cultural artifacts symbols that store mnemonic energy and can release that energy later in different contexts. They refresh social memories and help us to draw conclusions about collectively shared ideas (Erll 2005). “Pathos formulae” are rather about emotions than information and by looking at the material storage media we can discover symbolic expressions mediating between yesterday and today (Erll 2004). The linking of emotions with the material level in particular proves the appropriateness of this concept in connection to considering popular media the material dimension of my construct, as will the outline of “the popular” reveal.

The material dimension serves as my basis from which I will finally aim to infer potential collective memories. Erll rightly highlights the importance of the material dimension by saying that it is “only via medial externalization that ... memory ... can be shared” (Erll 2008, 11), thereby additionally drawing a connection to the second dimension, which I consider essential in terms of gaining information about collective memories: the social dimension. Neiger et al. support this view by emphasizing that collective memory “must be concretized” (5, 2011). As already demonstrated, collective memories are socially embedded and constructed. Since media of collective memory serve as their carriers, I argue that they emerge in interplay of communication about different cultural objectifications being offered by media of collective memory. Hence, I maintain that

*collective memories are created through communication among individuals, i.e. they are socially constructed. This is what I refer to as the social dimension of collective memory.*

For the course of this study, this implies that if no one talks about a certain media offer, it will not become a medium of collective memory and consequently not part of collective memory. Therefore, it is not enough to draw a cartoon about Lincoln but it is necessary to connect this artifact with a vehicle—within this study popular media—that offer the best potential of circulating the object amongst as many people as possible. I also consider it important to mention that the social dimension of collective memory is closely connected with the

institutionalization and functionalization of certain media (Erll 2004, 16). When I speak of “institutionalization”, I do not refer to “official institutions”, as Assmann's “cultural memory” does<sup>38</sup>, but consider institutionalizing as a social process that is undertaken by the people deliberately *and to their own taste*. To my understanding, the social dimension of collective memory is not linked to official institutions but to common individuals and their everyday practices. Even though Schmidt includes social institutions like “schools, publishing houses, or television broadcasters” (198) in his social dimension and Erll underlines the importance of institutionalization in order to ensure descent (134), both scholars refer to the social dimension of MEDIA of collective memory. I regard the social dimension of my model as the social context in which communication about a media product/offer takes place, thereby placing it on the level of collective memory itself. It is the potential of communication that decides which medium offer develops into a medium of collective memory, thereby interrelating to the aspect of relevancy. In this context it is interesting which social groups make use of a certain medium. In Posner's model, the social dimension of culture is described as “social behavior, rituals, and forms of communication”. Hence, the material dimension will certainly be examined according to their institutional embeddedness (as mentioned above), but within the social dimension I address the question of what potential functions of the material dimension (Erll 2005) emerge in social contexts, thereby mainly focusing on the functionalization of cultural texts.

Different media offers are created and functionalized to different specific needs<sup>39</sup>, i.e., I claim that the publishing of a popular artefact occupies the intention of reaching a specific audience. According to Erll, there are two options. First, producers try to establish certain media and want them to become collectively shared, i.e. to become media of collective memory. The second possibility is that certain media are turned into media of collective memories by their recipients, even though those media offers had not been considered to fulfill this function initially. For instance, there might be cases with no intention behind but certain media just happen to contain decisive clues and make them collectively used and shared. It will be outlined later on that it is not important for this study who established a

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<sup>38</sup> Barry Schwartz also mentions “chronicles, archives, shrines, and monuments” (1991, 302), Heinrich criticizes Douglas approach of giving institution a major role in the progress of creating social memories (49ff. )

<sup>39</sup> As described, I can only offer potential functionalization as their precise use cannot be fully empirically determined.

certain medium, but only if it has enough potential to be functionalized as a medium of collective memory. To exemplify, both a high-budget Hollywood blockbuster and a tiny, small-scaled amateur cartoon about Lincoln have a potential of becoming a medium of collective memory if matching specific premises.

With regard to my approach, consequently, the analysis of cultural artifacts has to be guided by its social functionalization. However, the social dimension is not as obvious as the material one and I will, thus, present only potential functions of the perspective of social context, which means that I can only speculate on how artifacts may be used, circulated, and discussed.

Media of collective memories hold several functions per se. I profess that the primary function is to become socially operative. If a medium is not accepted by society, i.e. it is not being talked about and no communication takes place, it cannot act as a mediator between individual thoughts and a collective level and therefore not become a medium of collective memory. Other functions that those media have are

- storing information about the past<sup>40</sup>,
- constructing images, or
- reshaping existing images by enriching, redesigning, or deconstructing them, and
- circulating said images.

Since it is only through their circulation among members of society that enables media to influence “perception and memory” (Erll, my translation), I will base my choice of popular media upon this notion. Moreover, I claim that media of collective memory are inherently not “objective” and that we are always confronted with a mediated past or edited images. I want to find out which images of Abraham Lincoln are currently<sup>41</sup> mediated and which functions these representations have.

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<sup>40</sup> The storage function of media is particularly relevant to this thesis when connected to a collective memory with regard to associated concepts such as functional memory (“*Funktionsgedächtnis*”), where memory is updated through regular communication (Erll, 10). For the purposes of this study, media of social memory that store information about the past, as with “cultural memory”, are not important.

<sup>41</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, this study focuses on the twenty-first century.

### *Third dimension*

Posner's model of culture implies three dimensions: the mental, social, and material one. Following Erll's assumption of collective memory serving as an interface of the mental and social dimension, I deduce that derived potential functions of the former help compose the latter. Adopting this, I claim that artifacts transmitted in popular media make up the material dimension of collective memory. I will examine these artifacts with regard to their socially embedded potential functions, which makes up my social dimension of collective memory. When taking Posner's mental dimension into account and replacing it, as argued, with collective memory, I arrive at the intermediate result that my notion of collective results from the examination of a social functionalization (social dimension/potential functions of representations) in media of collective memory (material dimension/representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media).

Table 2

Comparison between Posner's Model of Culture and My Notion of Collective Memory

<i>Posner's Model of Culture</i>	<i>My Notion of Collective Memory</i>
Material Dimension	Media of Collective Memory
Mental Dimension	Collective Memory
Social Dimension	Potential Social Functionalization

As Erll has stated, media of collective memory serve as an interface of the mental and social dimension (2005, 101ff). I transfer this idea and conclude that cultural artifacts transmitted in popular media are also part of the material dimension of collective memory. These artifacts will be examined with regard to their socially embedded potential functions—which constitutes the social dimension. This is done in order to finally present different views and attitudes towards Abraham Lincoln, which have been described as collective memory, hence, the mental dimension.

In this chapter I initially focused on outlining my understanding of collective memory. As a second step I expanded my concept by setting a framework condition to determine what I consider media of collective memories. As a third step, I implemented my basic approach of analyzing potential functions of representations of Abraham Lincoln as a social level, interacting with the two established designs of collective memory (as a mental level) and

media of collective memory (as a material level). Before I can apply this concept to my study of popular media memory, I still have to narrow down the general field of “media of collective memory” to popular media specifically. In doing so, I will define what popular media means in the context of my studies in order to justify my approach of estimating popular media artifacts as carriers of collective memory and present my choice of specific popular media artifacts as my objects of investigation.

## 2.2 Outlining “The Popular”: Towards a Working Definition of the Popular

After having presented my concept of *collective memory* and my general understanding of *media of collective memory* in previous chapters, it is the purpose of this stage to establish a working definition of “popular” in order to define which types of texts will be analyzed within this study, in other words, preparing the dissociating of *popular media* from other media.

Although I acknowledge that most people have a vague understanding of what they regard as “popular”, I have encountered lack of a clear definition in academia and thereby approve Cullen who calls the term “elastic” (3) and regrets the absence of a universally accepted definition of it. I am aware that it will neither be possible to present an exact, a precise, nor a right definition of it (Hügel 1); but as Brown suggested, each generation has to define its own current definition of “pop” (in Freese 81ff.)—and this is what I intend to do. In my quest for a working definition, I will follow a two-fold approach. First, I expect benefits from briefly recapitulating how the aspect of popular has been defined in scholarly works on popular culture over the course of time, especially in regard to outlining fundamental features and the relationship between creator and recipient. Second, I will scrutinize more current concepts and definitions of popular to eventually come up with my own definition, showing what cultural objects need to fulfill in order to become an object of investigation, i.e. being considered a “popular” medium in the sense of this study. In doing so, I will focus on the time period from the president’s death to the present age in order to establish a reference to



Lincoln as the main object of this study. Moreover, this corresponds to the selection of time frames of both the preparatory chapter 3 and main analysis 4.<sup>42</sup>

The understanding of popular within the context of popular culture has undergone a change in the course of time from a distancing and condemning aristocratic counter-concept to high culture; to both a pessimistic, production-oriented mass commercial concept and struggle for hegemony; to eventually developing towards a receptionist-oriented model that sublated the aesthetic boundaries of high and popular culture.

Resulting from the industrial revolution, the second half of the nineteenth century had an enormous impact on society and influenced life in a variety of ways. Until then it had been the upper-class who had had the exclusive claim on culture over “nonelites” (Mukerji and Schudson 9ff.). It was in this period when this aristocratic highbrow view started to compete with the growing lowbrow culture (Harrington 6, Hecken 191) and a possible formation of a philistine society (José Ortega y Gasset qtd. in Hecken, 27ff.). Lowbrow, or popular culture, was obviously used to denounce and distinguish any part of culture that did not meet the privileged, aristocratic standards of high culture. With respect to this study, however, I claim that the idea of defining “the popular” as “the other than high” is insufficient. Though I acknowledge Fiske and Hùgel, who use high culture to distinguish popular culture from it, and Hùgel, who emphasizes the importance of high culture as an “anchor” or reference point to popular culture, I see the current boundaries between high and pop too blurry, as the subsequent discussion will reveal. However, what should be retained is the ascribed upcoming force of the underclass. Hence, when analyzing representations of Abraham Lincoln later on, it is this early conception of “the popular” that would allow me to integrate a great variety of artifacts, even against potential allegations of being too lowbrow.

During the first half of the twentieth century, technological progress was rapidly advancing and paved the way for modern capitalism. Inventions such as the assembly line made manual labor more and more obsolete (Rosenberg and White 363ff.) and a simultaneously emerging middle-class experienced the benefits of spare time. This new freedom of social loafing was filled by a booming mass media, with Hollywood, radio stations and TV programs being framed by an equally booming advertising industry, both leading to a popular mass culture

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<sup>42</sup> Willingly neglecting discussion about the origins of popular culture, e.g. if its formation should be dated back to 5000 BC (Harrington), and also its relationship to and distinction from folk culture (Storey). This would go beyond the scope of this chapter.

that was based on two basic aspects: firstly, it was created within a profit-oriented commercial setting (Clement Greenberg in Hecken 33) and, secondly, it was produced by means of mass production. White and Rosenberg describe this process and blame the masses for not being critical enough to realize what was occurring: “society abhors a vacuum and fills it with . . . stupefaction” (7). Hence, I infer that “the popular” was seen as produced by a manipulative commercial mass media under control of a few tycoons that imposed superficial and aesthetically inferior products upon the conditioned and homogeneous masses<sup>43</sup>. At that stage, a top-down exertion of influence was taking place, with the possibility of imposing (political) messages and subtexts on the recipients (examples will be given in the analysis of representations in the twentieth century). Nevertheless, when applied to the intention of this study, the aspect of popular culture being closely connected to “the masses” is particularly crucial as it attracts the largest audiences (Paul R. Gorman in Hecken 191) and aims at reaching a “significant percentage of the population”. Whether this popular culture has to be closely connected to the profit-making industry can be put up to discussion, but “regardless of who or by whom it is produced, [it] speaks to a large audience“ (Grosberg in Hecken 190). Calgary's line of argumentation - that the quantitative dimension is rather hard to grasp - can be countered with a reference to White, who referred to the importance of the proposition of artifacts itself rather than their actual consumption. This is in concordance with my claim to *not* investigate the actual use of “texts”, since this could only be done by empirical means. In this way, I focus on the potential scope only, thereby concentrating on whether an artifact “is generally available” (Hebdige 47). Hence, I follow Cullen's argumentation and determine that, if limited in scope, cultural objects cannot become popular.

It was not until the 1960s that a “cultural upheaval” (Mukerji 1) took place and a rather liberal view put the role of the consumer in perspective. A dynamic process started that finally led to a rethinking of the distinction between high and popular culture: Participation of the recipients in placing emphases would be playing a bigger role, thereby turning away from the pessimistic production-oriented model but also a purely “reception-oriented model of an expressive culture of the people” (Traube 127). Stuart Hall adds the image of struggle and speaks of a “battlefield” where a 'fight' of “the people” versus “the power bloc” was taking place (qtd. in Hügel 57). Fiske, even going one step further, describes popular culture as a reception means of the subordinates' resistance per se, in which Traube joins in by calling the

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<sup>43</sup> Criticized by Frankfurt School

struggle for hegemony a “zone of contention” (127). If adapted to my model, this would mean that popular artifacts might occupy a rebellious, pugnacious basic attitude that revolts and strikes back against an imposing class. At any rate, this view strengthens the role and influence of the formerly only receiving end and might be considered when defining “the popular” later on; though I do not consider a rebellious attitude an unconditional feature of it.

In the 1980s (McRobbie 2), the inversion from a production-oriented design to a receptionist-allocated model was completed and, at the same time, emphasized the aesthetic potential of popular culture. This postmodernist view completely overturned the negative connotations of what has been described as mass culture and considered qualities such as reproducibility as well as the simplicity of artifacts superior to the so-called unique high culture—even including a *Kultivierung* of “bad taste” (Sontag 291). Further features were, according to Dominic Strinati, the breakdown of the distinction between culture and society, the breakdown of the distinction between art and popular culture, and the emphasis on style at the expense of substance (225). I consider this a valuable conception as it offers several important perceptions for the intention of this study—both in regard to the selection of material and defining basic characteristics of “the popular”. Firstly, the breakdown between culture and society brings out a union of popular culture and the everyday way of life (Hügel) that “govern[s] all other forms of social relationship” (Strinati 224), with mass media and popular culture having become an integral part of the real world (McRobbie 5ff.). Hence, the cultural process is not determined by the media but by its recipients (Hügel 10ff.), whereas the latter group is described as “self-conscious” (13), powerfully ordinary (both coined by Mukerij), and critical. Second, the breakdown of a dichotomy (Fluck 15) between high art and popular culture makes my upcoming choice of applicable media more irrefutable since “a radical distinction [between high and pop] cannot be maintained” (Mukerji).<sup>44</sup> In my view, however, the third aspect, i.e. the accusation of a loss in substance, needs a more critical investigation. Though several scholars criticized the shift towards a superficial, depthless, performance-oriented culture (Strinati, Jameson in McRobbie 2/3), I do not share this opinion and welcome the newly arisen possibilities of popular culture with a participating audience. It is especially the attributes of this new style, which R.B. Brown introduced as the three new r’s: reduce, reverse, recycle (37), that allow a quick response to an original artifact’s release

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<sup>44</sup> “We felt none of the dislike of commercial culture standard among intellectuals, but accepted it as a fact, discussed it in detail, and consumed it enthusiastically . . . and [treated] it with the seriousness of art” (Lawrence in Frith and Horne 104).

by quoting, recycling, parodying (McRobbie 23), or putting into different contexts—possibly even opposite to their original intention.<sup>45</sup> Thus, my potential choice of material is also protected against criticism towards “bad taste”, as a lack of beauty is, and I agree to Sontag here, an absolute reasonable character of the popular. I would even go so far as to say that these new aspects gainfully changed the notion of the *popular* in popular culture and, especially in combination with the exceeding possibilities of the world of communication via Internet, brings even more relevancy to the aspect of the “everyday” as it allows frequent and diverse views, offers a more “dynamic understanding of contemporary representation” (McRobbie 12) with a simultaneous acceptance by the intellectuals. However, these new techniques seem to me rather a possible tool but not a necessary precondition for artifacts of popular culture.

More recent concepts and definitions of “popular” follow the outlined path taken. One thing seems obvious: relevancy plays an important role. No matter whether produced by a big profit-seeking company or created in a back room or garage somewhere in an American suburb—there has to be something that people can identify with. This can happen because the object is open, polysemic (Fiske 141, Strinaty 208), or “producerly” (Fiske 103, on Barthes’s “writerly texts”). All these descriptions roughly mean that different audiences can interpret the very same object in a different manner and, especially the last term, establishes a connection to “meaning-making” and “pleasure” (both Meskill 98). Relevancy, thus, is only a further development of the previously mentioned concept of the “everyday” reflecting the real world and I rate this as an indispensable component. Objects that are based on “communal experience” and convention (Strinaty 47) or that speak in a “vernacular” (Browne in Hecken 191) style are likely to become well-liked, i.e. popular. Though both Cullmann and HÜgel criticize the strong linkage to the everyday by doubting that life represented through mass media really represents the everyday, I follow Fiske who highlights the everyday aspect: “If the cultural resource does not offer points of pertinence through which the experience of everyday life can be made to resonate with it, it will not be popular” (Fiske 89, also 122)<sup>46</sup>. Also, Browne’s mentioned connection of *popular* being linked to “well-liked” (also R. Williams 237) is an interesting aspect. Even though arguably hard to measure, I agree that “well-liked” artifacts are more likely to become circulated and being talked about from the

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<sup>45</sup> For those interested should read more on Mikhail M. Bakhtin’s concept of *Carnivalization*.

<sup>46</sup> I refrain from a discussion about “mediated past”. However, I acknowledge criticism in this matter and point to discussion.

recipients' perspective. However, I refrain from attributing the creator's side with the necessary intention of becoming much-loved or favored.

Another current, resurfacing characteristic for describing *popular* is the easy access for immediate consumption (Fluck 65ff.), which has already been touched in a previous passage when elaborating on emerging mass media and limitation in scope. In my view, a maximized range can best be, but not exclusively, reached by a distribution via mass media.

Additionally, popular culture has been credited with creating and changing social views: Harrington states that it "reflects and shapes broader social forces" within society (6), and Sequeira describes a two-way relationship with values being affected and reflected by popular culture (50ff.). Traube mentions in the discussion on the evaluation of the proportion and relationship between producers and consumers that "Popular Culture provides producers and consumers alike with a flexible idiom for constructing social identities" (141). Though the latter imputation might rather be reckoned as intrinsic functions than a defining element of the popular, it still serves as a solid proof to my basic approach: *popular* media, then, are a perfect means to explore the collective memory of the American people in regard to Abraham Lincoln since they serve as an inherent vehicle in forming identities.

All things considered, I arrive at the following conclusion for the purposes of this study:

*To be considered a popular medium, the object must be easily and openly accessible for an as wide as possible audience, ideally for everyone who is interested. It must be relevant and possess the potential of easily becoming an integral part of people's everyday life on the assumption that the recipient is able to identify with it to a sufficient extent, e.g. by reflecting or shaping fragments of real life, or displaying dreams and desires.*

After having outlined different types of social memory, I defined what collective memory means for the purpose of this study. Afterwards, *I focused upon general aspects of media of collective memory*, their inherent functions, and which role these media play within my theoretical framework. In this context it has been particularly highlighted that mass media have an important function. Furthermore, special attention has been turned to an explication of the term "popular" in order to continue the work on the theoretical structure by outlining which specific type of media this thesis is interested in, i.e. popular media by my own

definition. Now, interfaces of both theoretical components, i.e. popular media and collective memory, will be explicitly presented in order to prove that the integration of both concepts is a perfect means to provide a coherent theoretical framework for this thesis. Practically implemented this means that through the examination of popular media I expect to derive how collective memories are shaped by offering potential functions of Lincoln's representations.

### 2.3 Popular Media Memory: The Interface of Popular Forms of Cultural Expressions as Media of Collective Memory

Popular media and collective memory hold various common features and characteristics which can be divided up into four shared categories: their inherent bilateral correlation; both parties' affinity to masses, circulation, and communication; and their shared appeal to relevance and emotions. This list does not claim to be complete and is not static but illustrates and summarizes the features that have been previously outlined.

First, and arguably the most obvious choice, is that memories are both shared and created by different media, which expresses the fundamental dependence on each other. In my particular case, I have inferred that collective memories can be both shared and created by *popular* media. I also argue—developing this train of thought a little further—that the interplay of both concepts is based on the inference that popular media hold functions that are to some extent simultaneously preconditions of collective memories. Memories need carriers, i.e. media, to become collective. Hence, popular media form the material dimension of collective memories, as this approach defines them, and work as such vehicles.

Popular media, particularly since they have been defined as media that are accessible for a wide audience, are closely connected to the masses. In unison, as outlined, memories that are collectively shared depend on distribution and discussion. According to my definition, popular media provide this scope. As a consequence, popular media perfectly serve as circulation and communication media (Innis) and guarantee a distribution of their inherent potential messages. In other words, popular media ensure this needed wide coverage and meet the basic requirement for media to become media of collective memory: they offer memories to become widely distributed, communicated and, as a consequence, collectively shared. Inversely, if media are not talked about, they will not become media of a collective memory.

Popular topics that are transmitted by popular media therefore have a high potential of being shared and serving as a stimulus for discussion on a collective level. Thereby, they contribute to a functional memory, in contrast to a storage memory, such as with libraries and museums (A. Assmann 2004, 57), that have been linked to „dead“ cultural memory. Here again, this study follows Erll and is interested in media providing a fast circulation instead of „time-dependent media of storage“ (A. Assmann 2004, 10). Consequently, popular media that take advantage of the advanced technologies in the media sector will be carriers of and triggers for collective memories of different groups. Concerning this study, this implies that a Lincoln movie which is distributed via older forms of media only, e.g. home video cassettes, is less likely to become popular and part of collective memory these days than a film that is available on modern media such as DVD, Blu-Ray, or Internet video platforms.

Both popular media and collective memories are closely connected with relevance. Media do not become popular if they do not offer relevant topics and memories will not become collective if they do not offer a certain degree of relevancy as well. Their premise of being germane can be achieved by different features, some of which have already been mentioned: offering people diverse options to identify with, be it either the connection to the everyday, the offer of a plurality of meanings, or the appeal to emotions. Only if media offer relevance, would they be able to develop functions in their role within collective memories (Echterhoff, 80)—or in short: from relevance follows function. First, both popular media and collective memories are associated with the everyday. Popular media are popular because the media themselves are part of everyday life (newspapers, TV, computer, Internet) and they also mediate topics that are part of the ordinary, everyday world. As George Lipsitz has pointed out, popular texts provide people with something they can sympathize with (xii ff.). On the other hand, collective memories depend on everyday communication as well. Hence, collective memories emerging from popular media mostly refer to or are likely to be connected to the everyday to at least some extent. Second, popular media as *the* medium of collective memories consist of texts that are diverse and offer a plurality of meaning. This myriad of purports offers these media the chance of becoming accepted as a part of a collective memory since it is likely that many people find some relevant „points of identification“ (Fiske xxxii) in it as popular media can be interpreted in many different ways (Linke 8, in particular in relation to „Populärliteratur“). Third, relevancy is also closely associated with values and emotions that both approaches appeal to (Schmidt: emotions and

moral values, Lipsitz: values and beliefs). The identification with media that make media popular and the identification with memories that make memories collective can be easily assumed when they appeal to emotions, which opens the door to the introduced concept of the mental dimension. In both concepts, namely popular media and collective memory, a linkage to emotions, tensions, and desires has been presented, e.g., Aby Warburg's concept of pathos formulae was linked to intense emotions instead of retrievable information. Popular media, then, serve as certain cues that take effect in a social context, e.g. they can construct and integrate certain views into collective memories, or can stimulate a discussion that revises, deconstructs, or reshapes established views to present needs (Brockmeier, Neiger et al 2011, Halbwachs 1992, Douglas 1986, Schwartz 1991b). Especially in this context, the role of the formation of an identity (Lipsitz viii, Heinrich, Caldicott, Erll 2005 referring to Assmann and Nietzsche) and the invention of traditions (Weissberg, Caldicott) have been mentioned. The mental dimension of collective memories is best set forth by popular media because they, according to my definition, also cover topics such as dreams, desires, and everyday life. Here, the identification with a topic is the pre-stage for the formation of identity. Everyone is in the reach of popular media, everyone is a potential sharer of a collective memory, so the keyword of relevance brings us back to the masses. Both concepts are essential to the creation of collective identities. When looking at Lincoln's representations, it is the close connection to recent, relevant, and significant topics that makes them likely to become popular and, consequently, part of popular media memory. This also means that revived older representations, such as a Lincoln cartoon from the twentieth century, could at any time become part of recent popular memory if topical and taken back into circulation.

Different points of contact and interference between popular media and collective memory have been presented. For the upcoming analytic chapter, popular media artifacts will be the main objects of analyses. They have been presented as the relevant type of media in terms of shaping collective memories. I have also outlined that I consider these artefacts the material dimension of collective memories as they offer, to my view, the best possible way of drawing conclusions about potential functions (on a social level) because *popular*, according to my presented definition, underlines and maintains the aspect of the *collective*. On account of this, I claim that it allows me to determine conclusive offerings about collective memories, i.e. the mental dimension. In other words: The emerging collective memory that is dependent on popular media as their material distributor will be referred to as *popular media memory*



I will now look at representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media, put those representations into a social context by extracting potential functions and together with the textual analysis I aim to draw conclusions about prospective collective memories. With all three dimensions being covered, the functions of Abraham Lincoln's representations and his role in recent popular media culture can then be presented.

Table 3

Popular Media Memory

	<i>Popular Media Memory</i>	<i>Within this Study</i>
<i>Content</i>	Representations of a past figure in present socio-cultural context	Representations of Abraham Lincoln in 21 <sup>st</sup> century socio-cultural context
<i>Forms</i>	Informal, relevant, popular “artifacts” that are circulated and communicated	e.g.: cartoons, movies, songs, commercials, etc.
<i>Media</i>	“mass” media that guarantee a wide distribution and, therefore, a potential large audience	e.g.: TV channel, movie theater, Internet, Instant View Channels,
<i>Time Structure</i>	Figures of any past reshaped and reused in present	Lincoln Figure of 19 <sup>th</sup> century reshaped or used in 21 <sup>st</sup> century
<i>Participation Structure</i>	Everyone with access to popular media can participate; people decide if media is accepted or rejected; explicitly no official bearers, no hierarchy	e.g.: both private uploads from independent artists and for-profit organizations

#### 2.4 Text Corpus: Selections of Popular Media Artifacts as Objects of Study

Every single artifact that is to become object of study will be individually checked for its compliance with the criteria of popular media artifacts presented and, thus, have its qualification validated for the purpose of this investigation. In the best case, those “texts” will fit various criteria to be ideally adapted. As my outlining of *popular* has revealed, popular media artifacts are likely to be initially located in the field of mass media, even though not necessarily ab initio. For instance, a text that had initially been published in a form that was not able to reach a wide audience—let’s say a comic about Lincoln drawn by a school girl that was only interchanged between her, her parents, and the teacher—can later become a popular

media artifact if this drawing is put on the Internet to extend its scope and to offer its adoption, reuse, reproduction (Brockmeier) alteration to other people. For the purpose of this study, distributing media—or as previously referred to as vehicles—could then be printing (newspapers, magazines, books, etc.), the radio (Kaplan), television (Sturken, Edgerton and Rollins), cinema (Rosenstone), recording devices (DVD, Blu-Ray, files), the Internet (Assmann 2004), and mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, notebooks, e-books, etc.) as well as, arguably, billboards and popular art (Lipsitz)—and many more. They serve as vehicles or “outlets” (Neiger et al. 2011, 13) for sharing the popular artifacts to be potentially investigated, such as different forms of TV shows (cartoons, sitcoms, films, etc.), movies, articles, websites, blogs, songs, photographs, commercials, feeds, podcasts, computer games, etc.

For the purpose of this study, I will refrain from including several categories of popular media artifacts per se. Answering Neiger’s critique of too much commemorative memory (2011, 13ff.) being part of scholarly discussion, I abstain from considering artifacts that were obviously implemented by official bearers. For example, the Illinois Office of Tourism launched a state-sponsored promotional campaign and put out several advertising clips that had a miniature stop-and-motion Lincoln puppet explore the “Land of Lincoln” state. In my view, I see a contradiction to my previously discussed notion of “popular” in so far as those examples bear a high potential of being biased, namely worshipping the official figure of Lincoln. However, if state-funded artifacts would then be reused, reconstructed in different context by non-official agents, they would become eligible again. Furthermore, I will leave out news, documentaries, and other journalistic works following Neiger et al. by allocating them “to ‘true’ historiography” (2011, 7) and an intrinsic commitment to a “common ethos of depicting the past according to agreed-upon, publicly known conventions” (7) thereby totally lacking the required feature of “openness”.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, I will do without radio broadcasts or podcasts, simply due to the very difficult operability. Beyond that, I will also forego any consideration of computer games since an analysis would both go beyond the manageable scope of this study since most games offer thousands and thousands of options to play and influence the game in manifold directions.

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<sup>47</sup> Picking up Zelizer (in Neiger et al: 7) who claims that no main theorist included “news making” as important component.

As aforementioned, each and every object of study will be checked for its applicability. I am aware that there are vastly more objects available than could ever be discussed within the scope of this study. Moreover, I am also sensitive of the fact that as a German scholar mostly working from Germany, some artifacts that might have been considered important by American colleagues will be overlooked within this study. However, I have tried my best to gather information from American primary sources, exploring blogs, articles, books, YouTube channels and what not to encounter a plethora of potential artifacts. In case I missed an “important” one, I would like to call for further investigation since it did not happen on purpose—but it might simply be a sign that it might not have been popular enough, in my view, since it was not as easily accessible as to be expected according to the framework of this study.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIONS FROM 1865 TO 1999

Within this chapter, I provide a discussion of selected representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media from the time of his death through the end of the twentieth century. I have installed it as a preparatory chapter for the upcoming main analysis as its design is to demonstrate the development of potential functions throughout the years and eventually assess their status quo at the turn of the century. On that account, the displayed remarks in this outline will not be too detailed and cover a smaller range of examples in comparison to the forthcoming main analysis in the subsequent chapter. The overview presented here will demonstrate, in connection to the historical progress of popular media already outlined (see chapter 2, especially 2.4), a development from representations focusing on his positive images, such as “the emancipator”, “union savior”, or “American man”, towards those where he has become a potential spokesperson for contemporary political and social topics, criticized the same, or even been turned into a subject of humor and ridicule. The period of time considered was densely covered with depictions of Lincoln in popular media. Therefore, as mentioned before, I restrict myself to a selection of examples that have been, to my impression, most frequently discussed elsewhere or make up the most important milestones to my view in order to illustrate the development. Hence, I make no claims of offering a complete list by any means. For anyone interested in a full account, I suggest Reinhart’s *Abraham Lincoln on Screen: Fictional and Documentary Portrayals on Film and Television* that offers a more comprehensive list on Lincoln depictions between 1865 and 1999.

The silent movie *The Birth of a Nation* was released in 1915 and is probably Lincoln’s first major appearance on the big screen. Whereas Schwartz (2008) accredits George Washington with being the unifying symbol of the American people (14) before the turn of the century, this film shows Lincoln’s evolving prestige throughout the Progressive Era, shifting more and more towards the center stage and taking over the nation’s leading role as both its prime unifying and heroic figure.

In terms of popularity, the 185-minute film was not only a commercial success at that time (Lang, 30), but also received praise for its innovative filming technique (Reinhart 9, 56). However, it also faced a barrage of criticism for highly racist scenes, which are even claimed to have boosted the refoundation of the Ku-Klux-Klan (Kolker). It was later released on VHS, DVD, and Blu-ray, and is now available in full length on YouTube. Scholars referred to it as

“one of the most important films in the history of motion pictures” (Reinhart 56) or simply “the most important film of all time” (Salter). In his article “The Lost Cause and the Won Cause: Abraham Lincoln on politics and the movies”, Wilentz emphasizes the importance and influence of *The Birth of a Nation* on American popular culture and Reinhart points out the power of the movie medium to convey ideas back then (58)<sup>48</sup>. Both arguments make a discussion within this thesis even more justified. However, in contrast to both Reinhart and Wilentz, who try to oppose their observations of the movies (fiction) to historical accuracy (facts) of the same events, I will concentrate on the main idea of this thesis by carving out potential functions of Lincoln’s representations.

The story is basically about the relation between a Northern and a Southern family during the Civil War and the subsequent time of reconstruction. President Lincoln appears in four different scenes. In the first one, he is with his cabinet members and calls in the troops by signing a document in tears and prayers. In the second, he is depicted overturning a federal death sentence, granting a mother’s wish to save the life of her soldier son. The third scene showing Lincoln is his meeting with the Speaker of the House when the President rejects the Speaker’s revengeful reconstruction plan on the South and graciously tells him that he intends to take the South back as if it had never left. Lincoln’s fourth and final appearance takes place when his assassination is shown “with great realism” (Reinhart 58).

In my interpretation, all of the appearances mentioned indicate a heroic depiction of Abraham Lincoln with a potential function of having influence on the viewers in terms of establishing a martyr and near-divine status. This corresponds for one to Coccoma’s idea of a Lincoln myth. Furthermore, I argue that director Griffith explains the historical harsh treatment towards the South after the war with the death of the “Great Heart” Lincoln (Salter 9), thereby projecting his hope for a peaceful reconstruction era from a Southerner viewpoint to the President’s (depicted) kindness (Stokes 2011, 48). Moreover, I agree with Stokes’ interpretation of the President functioning as a “symbol of national unity” (2007, 208). In concordance with Schwartz’s view, who sees Lincoln’s role in the first half of the twentieth century as a “national idol” (2008 xi, 23), the analysis of further movies of this era will reveal

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<sup>48</sup> Wilentz bitterly complains about the lost cause of pro confederate propaganda and conventional wisdom in the movie.

a further rise of President Lincoln to becoming the most important psychological parent for the American people, so to say.

Fifteen years later, Griffith undertook a second try at presenting a fully-fledged movie covering the whole life of the sixteenth President, now with the technical development of sound in hand. Although the commercial success of *D.W. Griffith's Abraham Lincoln* at that time was rather limited, the movie has developed into one of the more important films about the bearded president just as regards the amount of discussion alone.

From my point of view, Griffith concentrates on two major goals in terms of depicting Abraham Lincoln, i.e., installing him as both a biblical Christ-like figure and the ultimate symbol of the union (Bocko; Schwartz 2008, 6). Lincoln's representation as a Christ figure (Coccoma) finds its configuration in various scenes. One of them is his birth in a modest dwelling—alluding to the birth of Jesus Christ—which is directly preceded by a rather cruel scene on a slave ship at sea. In the later course of the movie, a chain gang of slaves is shown, singing a song demanding freedom. Immediately after, Lincoln reads a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. These direct connections between Lincoln and slaves fit in with the line of using biblical references; Hoffman and Bocko compare the latter scene with Moses freeing a people. Another allusion to religion is Lincoln's manifestation in the very last scene of the film, when his (recently erected) memorial is decorated with a halo-like illumination. The President's depiction as the Savior of the Union, on the other hand, becomes evident by the sheer quantity of mentions of his primary goal to preserve the Union. Lincoln speaks of it at least four different times (Stokes 2013, 65), thereby arguably shifting the depicted reason for the Civil War away from the issue of slavery (Bocko, Coccoma).

In terms of potential functions of Lincoln's representations, I argue that the installation of a Christ figure and Savior of Union might serve to supply the suffering audience—the economic crisis of 1929 still affected life heavily—with a healing figure in general (Coccoma; Schwartz 2008, 85). In this line, the deliberate choice and rejection of various milestones of Lincoln's life within the motion picture sets priorities in this respect and supports this postulation. The selection of early life excerpts show his humble origins, Hoffman calls him

“primordial Lincoln”, and could be seen as a forerunner to the picture of the American man<sup>49</sup>, which will be shown in the later development of his role in popular media in the twentieth century. With a presidential depiction linking the achievement of great accomplishments by hard work and dignity and also touch, Lincoln potentially gives his descendants the needed role model for their way out of the crisis. Interestingly, the Gettysburg Address does not find any mentioning at all, which would support the already tackled poorly sketching of emancipation (Hoffman) in Griffith’s *Abraham Lincoln*.

In the years 1939 and 1940 three movies were released in which depictions of Abraham Lincoln played major roles: *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*. However, I will refrain from discussing the first mentioned film because the President only functions as an inspiring post-mortem advisor for the disillusioned protagonist Mr. Smith in form of the Lincoln Memorial, thus not matching the self-imposed parameter of this thesis. Therefore, I will highlight Lincoln’s representations accompanied with respective functions in the two latter motion pictures, which “would virtually define Lincoln big screen portrayals for mainstream audiences from their initial release until the present day” (Reinhart 12) and, thus, make up a perfect match as object of study.

As the film’s title suggests, *Young Mr. Lincoln*’s storyline focuses on his early life as a young adult in Springfield and covers his days as a shop-keeper, his tragically ending love to Ann Ruthledge, and, most importantly, his time as a “fledging lawyer” (Reinhart 219). A “series of vignettes” (Wilentz) help shape, to my view, his character line, amongst them his judging in a pie-making contest and winning rail-splitting and tug-of-war contests. The way I see it, all of these incidents allude, at least partly, to the symbolism of an “American man”. In terms of his legal work, the movie intents on Lincoln’s first case in particular, in which he successfully defends two alleged murderers after rescuing them from being lynched by a mob with “his reason, humor, and strength” (Coccoma).

Although opinions seem to vary if Lincoln’s depictions is more in concordance to the classical idea of “myth” (Reinhart, Wilentz) or rather approaching the concept of “the American man” (Coccoma), I do not see a necessity to decide for either option, but rather

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<sup>49</sup> “By the 1930s, however, Lincoln’s image had evolved into one of an uncommon common man, a nobody who by dint of his rail-splitter’s physical strength, his homespun wit, and his lawyerly purposeful mind rose to become a great American” (Wilentz).

determine a combination of both. The examples of a young adult Lincoln in the movie enable a display of his character in “polygonal intricacy” (Coccoma) and arguably indicate his presidential achievements by showing his already existing greatness in early days (Malcom). Judging a pie contest in a charming way, overcoming a personal crisis after Ann Ruthledge’s death, his ability to become a self-taught lawyer—all these examples make him a potential American man, a prototype for “traditional post-war folk hero – man of the land, defender of American values” (Hogan qtd. in Biancolli). On top of that, the community spirit that he sets an example of, especially in the mob scene as well as his successful work as an attorney, make up, according to my interpretation, a driving force for becoming what Reinhart called “a mythical hero” (221) and canonized “larger-than-life symbol of the American spirit” (13). Also, the mentioned community mood potentially works as to foreshadow his later role as a unifying president.

*Abe Lincoln in Illinois* focuses on the time span from the early 1830s when Lincoln leaves Kentucky and arrives in New Salem until his election as President in 1861 with his eventual leaving for Washington. Although the motion picture was not a commercial success at that time (Stokes 2013, 76), it is nowadays considered a classic<sup>50</sup>. It was released in 1940 and is based on the eponymous Broadway play that premiered in 1938. The movie approaches various important stages of Lincoln’s pre-presidential life, both privately and occupationally. For example, the first part of the movie tackles his military service during the Black Hawk War and expands on his relationship to Anne Ruthledge that ends with a dramatic confession of love on her death-bed. Later, another woman enters Abraham’s life—Mary Todd as a very ambitious yet termagant and unlikeable character that pushes him into his political career path. One major political focus is on the Lincoln-Douglas-Debates and his eventual election to presidency. Interestingly, as Stokes points out, 17 years of political contention is totally ignored, amongst others the Kansas-Nebraska-Act or the emergence of the Republican Party, under which flag Lincoln would become President after all (2013, 74).

The describing of Lincoln by New York Times’ reviewer Frank S. Nugent in 1940, who would later become a successful screenwriter himself, expresses the President’s depiction very well and various scholars would later think along similar lines:

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<sup>50</sup> As pointed out by referring to Reinhart



These were the prairie years, the years of a shopkeeper and postmaster, of a sheepish candidate for the Illinois Legislature, of a taciturn lawyer, of a tragic lover who stood over his sweetheart's grave, of a failure who fled to the wilderness to search his soul, of a man who wore his crown of thorns beneath a stovepipe hat and accepted public life as a martyrdom for his belief in the right. These were the years of doubt and denial, of relentless self-criticism, of a fiercely antagonistic marital relationship, of the empty triumph of winning an office he did not want, that held no illusions for him, that made the cheers of his electors a hollow, dirgeful mockery. (Nugent 1940)

Young adult Abraham Lincoln is depicted as a sluggish, passive character that seems only driven by his environment and his ambitious wife Mary Todd in particular. His vulnerability becomes evident with his love to Anne Rutledge being exaggerated to “unrealistic heights”, with the president-to-be even being present at her death-bed.<sup>51</sup> Several people sense greatness in the early Lincoln already, amongst them, as already mentioned, his wife Mary Todd who literally forces him to his destiny. Wilentz sees the main reason for the movie’s focus on the Lincoln-Douglas-Debates in addressing the slavery issue and Lincoln’s attitude towards it. In this context, I agree with both Wilentz and Olson and construe Abraham Lincoln’s representation in this movie as a man who is struggling to take a stand against slavery publicly or not<sup>52</sup>, referring to Nugent’s view of “doubt and denial”, and only takes a stand very late in the movie.

All in all, I find a next step in humanizing Lincoln in this tragic movie with many examples of personal struggle and a man who is pushed into his destiny. It also serves on and helps establish some popular myths, especially his relationships to Anne Rutledge and Mary Todd or not possessing any intrinsic motivation (Reinhart 13)—all of them succumbing any historical examination. When it comes to outlining potential functions of described representations, to my mind, a very important factor is the political atmosphere of 1938 to 1940 where Olson rightly sees an attempt to “equate America’s dilemma” to rising fascism in Europe and the question of intervening in what would later become World War II or not. Stokes concurs with this view and argues that the film might be more about the 1930s than

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<sup>51</sup> Both influences of women described as inaccurate by Reinhart, but not important to this investigation. Important is what is depicted and deriving potential functions

<sup>52</sup> Although Olson talks about play, I hold this true for the film version as well.

about the 1850s and states that the film—and Abraham Lincoln as part of it—serves “as a timely reminder of core American values in a menacing world” (2013, 74). According to my understanding, the movie tries to show with Lincoln as its protagonist that sometimes a war is inevitable to restore (or maintain respectively) unity and democracy. Thus, I see less potential criticism of Lincoln’s indecisiveness but rather, with regard to contemporary relevancy available now, an indirect worshipping of the later president as a human being that the suffering American man can relate to on a personal level. This bonding is in particular highly likeable due to Lincoln’s depicted sadness, emerging from humble origins, and plain and undecided character that makes him approachable by any American man.

As outlined, the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by full length movies containing mostly worshipping representations of the sixteenth President, mainly focusing on emancipation or his union saving efforts. However, after the two full-lengths movies from 1939 and 1940 respectively, full-fledged versions became rare in the 1940s and 1950s (Reinhart 14), especially motion pictures covering Lincoln’s whole life. I see two possible reasons for this. It could have happened because the two movies seemed to have “covered it all”, making it uninteresting for film makers to shoot a movie about Lincoln again—both in terms of personal interest and box office success. Another reason is arguably the emergence of other types of mass media (as explained in regard to popular media in chapter 2), mirroring the years after World War II as a time driven by technology with an “expanding role of science and technology and mass media (Schwartz 2008, 16)”, such as radio, television, and even video. In my view, a shift occurred that took Lincoln away from big picture cinema movies to a rise of representations in new media pushing him off the center stage. Notably, and as will be presented, visual representations on TV—be it series, cartoons, or lightweight movies—were featuring him less and less as the major character or protagonist, and more and more in a supporting role with him increasingly appearing in cameos, or just having his trademark traits transferred to other persons.

*April in Paris* from 1952 is a first example that combines a cameo of Lincoln, this time using his trademarks in a dancing scene. In this light weighted musical romance, the male protagonist dances with two come-to-life paintings of George Washington and Lincoln that join him in a “pas de trios”. All characters are played by the protagonist himself. As the lyrics of the song deal with his dream of becoming President one day if all goes well with his love

to the female protagonist, I argue that this “Lincolnian” appearance serves as a tribute to Lincoln being considered at least one of the two greatest Presidents the United States ever had: a role model to look up to and emulate. The fact that the Lincoln figure joins the dance allows interpretations on two levels. Firstly, it makes the sixteenth President seem to approve the protagonist’s pursuit of his presidential dream on the one hand and, secondly, arguably makes Lincoln himself appear as a man of the people and very likeable on the other. This depiction fits to Hogan’s view of the 1950s as a time of Lincoln as a “post-war folk hero” (Biancolli).

Another instance of a Lincoln impersonation occurs in the Warner Bros. Looney Tunes episode “Southern Fried Rabbit” in which Bugs Bunny disguises himself as Abraham Lincoln. The show was first released in 1953, thus representing the time of the rising mass media television. The six-minute cartoon mainly deals with Bugs Bunny heading south to escape a carrot famine. In the course of his journey, the rabbit is trying to cross the Mason–Dixon line, which is guarded by Yosemite Sam in a Confederate uniform—even though the Civil War had been over for 90 years. “Yankee” Bugs tries various ways to go past Yosemite, one of them is making use of Abraham Lincoln. After disguising himself as a slave, Bugs suddenly hands Sam a whip and begs for merci. Bugs leaves Sam thunderstruck, only to return within a second—this time wearing a black coat, beard, and a stovepipe hat. “Bugs Lincoln” asks the Confederate about his behavior. Caught off guard, Sam cannot answer but only stutters and Bugs strides past him. The plan is almost successful, but the visible bunny tail reveals Lincoln’s true identity so that Sam is able to stop Bugs Bunny.

This cartoon has been subject of controversial discussions, mainly because of its alleged racist impersonation of a slave in blackface and exaggerated orange lips (Lehman 110). As a result it was cut and censored and shown as an edited version ever since. Nevertheless, the original, uncut version is still circulating the Web, is officially available on DVD and, thus, arguably the most popular kind—especially in regard to the theoretical framework of this thesis. In my interpretation, using Lincoln here has several potential functions. The President’s sole appearance leads the formerly aggressive and hell-bent Confederate stuttering and awestruck. I see this as a clear sign of Lincoln being depicted as a formidable memorial that immediately makes the Southern activist feel guilty. Consequently, Lincoln is honorably conveyed as the Emancipator of the slaves and, thus, seems able to take influence on the

South represented by Sam. Hence, I think along similar lines with Schwartz' classification of said epoch as a generation of "rights and justice" (2008, 10 and 16). Bugs' Lincoln stands for justice, morality, and equality and is displayed as a strong, respected warden on racial issues and, thus, also matches Hogan's already mentioned idea of Lincoln in the 1950s as a "defender of values" (Biancolli).

Whereas Schwartz ascertains a general decline of Lincoln's prestige commencing after 1945—although studying a different text corpus as explained in chapter 2—I do not see this claim unconditionally transferable to my concept of popular media memory as I will introduce various movies and TV series that still concentrate on depicting Lincoln as a positive, common value-imparting protagonist. However, having a cartoon rabbit impersonating the sixteenth President of the United States might not have been considered years before. The two arguably most prominent examples from the world of television series in the 1960, a time when TV had become a "major cultural force" (Ojaste), are *Twilight Zone* and *Star Trek*.

National Geographic describes *Twilight Zone* as an "anthology series about the supernatural" (Kiger). In its 156 episodes the show captures unusual events and typically conveys endings with a moral. Hunt calls it "by far one of the most influential and enduringly popular of all dramatic series" (Carroll and Hunt 1). And even today it is easily available on various Internet channels as well as on DVD, which should serve as a sufficient proof for its residual popularity in terms of this thesis. The episode "Passerby" takes place in April of 1865 and deals with a Southern wife waiting for her Confederate husband on her porch. While watching wounded soldiers silently passing her demolished house, she eventually realizes that the wounded men are the dead souls of the war walking towards the next world and that her husband has suffered the same fate. As she breaks down, President Lincoln approaches her and cites Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*<sup>53</sup> to calm her down. The wife seems to resign to her fate and let go her hatred of the Yankees, as she leaves her home and follows her husband down the road to the otherworld. They are eventually followed by President Lincoln who refers to him as "the last casualty of war".

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<sup>53</sup> "Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, it seems to me most strange that men should fear, seeing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come." *Julius Caesar* (Act 2, Scene 2). Interestingly, the first two lines left out that speak of cowards—giving the citation a more empathetic tone.

In my judgment, the dead President takes on the role of a calm guide and adviser who gave his life for his country and succeeded in ending the war. Furthermore, he is depicted as a well-read man. This representation potentially leads to a view of Lincoln as a man of the/his people. Even after his death, he cares about his nation, no matter if north or south, and does not leave the road to afterlife until the very last person has found his way to “the other side”, just as a captain is expected to stay aboard of his ship. Lincoln does not seem to conceive any regret or fear and considers his death a sacrifice worth making in his fight against slavery and secession. Hence, he sets an example of letting go of regret, wrath, and hate not only within this fictional play, but more importantly to viewers of this episode. Leaving behind prejudices and possessions might lead people to ascend to a higher conceptual level.

At the end of the 1960s, the science-fiction television series *Star Trek* aired on the NBC network. Although originally cancelled after three seasons, Gene Roddenberry's stories about the starship USS Enterprise produced a huge franchise with several spin-offs, be it additional television series, motion pictures, (computer) games, and much more, which makes it arguably one of the most popular science-fictions TV shows in history. With its numerous parodies and references, it occupies an important place in popular culture as “it made the vocabulary of science-fiction main stream” (Gerrold X). Since creator Roddenberry felt restricted by censorship, he deliberately placed the setting of his story into space in order to comment and advertise his thoughts on contemporary issues (Schlecker) and philosophize about the “possibilities of humanity” (Gerrold XI). On account of this, it seems worthwhile to have a close look at Lincoln's appearance in *Star Trek*.

In the 1969 episode *Savage Curtain* “simulacrums” (Hemmingson 64) of Abraham Lincoln and Vulcan legend Surak join Captain Kirk and Spock in an imposed fight to death against four notorious villains from human history as an alien creature wants to understand the human concept of “good vs. evil”. After initially refusing to fight, Kirk and Spock end up to be the only survivors and manage to save the threatened crew.

In my estimation, Lincoln is accredited with several functions which I, especially from today's point of view, consider noble and heroic. They represent what Hogan describes as an image of a “flexible hero” and a “general symbol of good” (63). However, at the time of its first airing, at least one of these functions might have resulted in more controversial discussions. Firstly, Lincoln is constructed with a virtually perfect image. His introductory

scene shows him sitting on a throne in space, formally dressed with all known features such as his stovepipe hat, bow-tie, and black coat. Other characters associate him with noble words, for example “wisdom”, “gentle”, and “kind”. His personal choice of words, especially in contrast to the crew members, not only makes him sound majestic but also well-read and eloquent. Furthermore, various references to Lincoln’s real life are present that support his positive appearance, e.g., a reference to his wrestling days. Secondly, Lincoln’s figure is displayed as a first-class idol. His sole participation in this episode can be traced back to the fact that he is a personal idol of Captain Kirk. As the storyline reveals, the alien creature residing on an uncharted planet scans the minds of both Kirk and Spock to find about their respective idols. By creating perfect images of those personal heroes, the alien is successful in arousing the curiosity of the two highest ranked members of the Enterprise and eventually lures them on the planet. This leads me to believe that the figure of Lincoln is that of a double idol. On the one hand, it serves as an independent heroic figure to the audience, mostly based on the already described way of representation, and on the other hand Lincoln is clearly depicted as the protagonist’s hero as well - a hero squared, in a way. Also, he is used to shed some glory on the captain of the Enterprise, e.g., when Lincoln ennobles him by comparing him with General Grant. It is remarkable and speaks volumes that a nineteenth century President is still known and admired in the twenty-third century. Establishing Lincoln in such high spheres lends even more substance to his actions and words, especially in regard to the show’s airing in the late 1960s. This leads me to the third and most important point, namely the episode’s particular reference to “the concern of the time” (Hogan 64). With the Vietnam War in full progress, looking for a judgmental reference of the show in regard to the involvement of the United States seems more than plausible in my view. Hogan describes a possible impact insofar as “[t]he audience is reminded of the futility of war but also of the nobility of self-sacrifice when war becomes inevitable” (64). Furthermore, she considers this appeal to be “a message for all Americans of that time”, no matter what they thought about the ongoing war (64 ff). In my interpretation of Lincoln’s function in this episode, I shift my focus to the first part of her argumentation, arguing that *Savage Curtain*’s main message lies in Lincoln’s lines “There’s no honorable way to kill, no gentle way to destroy. There is nothing good in war except its ending.” This would reflect Roddenberry’s publicly advertised adverse position against the US commitment in Vietnam and the Cold War as well (Franklin, Ojaste) and, consequently, make the image of Lincoln a bearer of this very message. Whereas

I personally do not approve of Hogan's second argument completely, I do nevertheless see a possible interpretation by the show's viewers that Lincoln and Surak should symbolize selfless, self-sacrificing commander-in-chiefs in a time, and I quote Lincoln from *Savage Curtain* here, when a "war is forced upon us". This might arguably also serve to give the dependents of the fallen soldiers some strengths and a respectful meaning to their great losses of their beloved ones.

All in all, Lincoln's representation in Star Trek's *Savage Curtain* is potentially able to serve various functions, amongst them a posthumous dignifying of his presidency by implementing a very favorable picture of his personality, endowing him with a perpetual picture of heroism as the ultimate self-sacrifice, and finally using these depictions to let him speak indirectly about contemporary topics, i.e. criticizing the at that time ongoing war in Indochina.

Another indicator that contradicts a possible transfer of Schwartz's observation of a declining Lincoln is, to my mind, Lincoln's initial use as an advertising character as the advertising industry had its "total ad expenditures increase[d] faster than the gross national product" ("History: 1970s") in the 1970s.

In 1971 a public service announcement featuring Abraham Lincoln ("PSA") sought to raise awareness about the possibility of gaining college credits from self-teaching. In this spot, the president is depicted in full rig, applying for a job in an executive position at an employment agency. While eating a sandwich without any table manners, the agent does not seem very much interested and optimistic when Lincoln tells him that he is self-educated and does not have a college degree. The ad closes with Lincoln leaving the agent's office frustrated and a voice-over explaining the possibilities of CLEP, the College Level Examination Program. Though I see a potential general reckoning with the businesses' demands for a college degree—arguably with the recent development until today in mind—my focus shall nevertheless lie on special functions that I accredit Lincoln's appearance with here in this announcement. In my perspective, the sixteenth President of the United States stands for the American self-made man and enables the TV spot to encourage people to still believe that it is possible to being the architect of one's own future by diligent and self-generated work. Transferred to the 1970s, this seemed to be considered highly impossible,

even if the intelligence of the applicant was not doubted<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, Lincoln symbolizes the best possible example of an executive position qua (former) office, which amplifies my attributed function of Lincoln performing as a bolstering model for so many talented people to move up from rags to riches, or from autodidact to top executive of the US. At the same time, the spot also bears potential of reminding people that even Lincoln would have problems to find an employment those days, so that there is no need to feel ashamed. Altogether, Lincoln is still depicted in the role of an idol and self-made American-man and with his help the PSA is able to demonstrate both (social) wrongs and, more importantly, solutions.

Three years later, a new format featuring Lincoln found its way into the world of television. The “fictional (historically based) miniseries” (Marc and Thompson 299) *Sandburg’s Lincoln* was produced by David Wolper and aired on NBC. Its six episodes were shown irregularly spread between 1974 and 1976. The ratings of the show, which was adapted from Pulitzer price-winning works of Carl Sandburg, were considered a success (Hamby; Steers 2007, 87). Although arguably lacking some historical facts (Reinhart 189), it was well received by critics and award giving institutions, e.g., Halbrook was awarded with an Emmy for his performance as Lincoln (Roberts 655). Today, Sandburg’s Lincoln is available on various Internet platforms and DVD. As a detailed analysis of each of the six episodes would go beyond the scope of this connecting chapter, the producers’ sole selection of episode themes along with general observations should suffice to offer plenty of different function analyses.

The series encompasses Abraham Lincoln’s life from his earlier days as a lawyer to his final days as President, ending with his journey to Ford Theater on the night of his assassination. “Prairie Lawyer” depicts Lincoln’s growing skills in the field of law and his accompanying “concern for human injustice” (“Prairie” 36) as well as his “awkward way with women”, dwelling on his relationships to Mary Owens and Mary Todd. “Crossing Fox River”, on the other hand, focuses on the time around the Presidential election of 1860, portraying Lincoln standing up against pressure for political deals or for a commitment to the race issue (“Holbrook” 10). The episode also shows him as a caring family-man who visits his step-mother before leaving for Washington. As the name indicates, “Mrs. Lincoln’s Husband” deals with the strained marriage and Abraham’s sticking by Mary Todd despite her

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<sup>54</sup> “Look, Lincoln, I know you’re a smart guy, you know you’re a smart guy; but you ain’t goin’ nowhere without that sheepskin, fella.”



difficult personality, especially in regard to the loss of their son and the mental pressure of the ongoing war. Whereas the counter-plotline of “Sad Figure Laughing” addresses Mary Todd’s feud with a “Grande Dame” of Washington’s society, the main plot regarding the head of state approaches Secretary Chase’s attempt to capture the presidential nomination in 1864. In the course of this incident, the victorious Lincoln proves to be indulgent as he appoints his former rival to the Supreme Court. “The Unwilling Warrior” observes Lincoln as commander-in-chief during the war years, covering his military leadership from 1861 through the fall of Richmond in 1865, including a scene showing a devastated Lincoln walking through the recaptured but demolished capital of the Confederates. “The Last Days” literally covers Lincoln’s ultimate days, without including his assassination itself, thereby concentrating both on his nightmares and premonitions about his dispatch but also outlooks on a peaceful reconstruction and a relieved and joyful personal future.

My interpretation sees the miniseries’ selection of topics laying a clear focus on depicting a human instead of a political Lincoln. In this way, my understanding concurs with other scholars such as Reinhart, who speaks of a “believable, human” (187) President; Peterson describing Lincoln’s depiction as a “papable human being” (389); or Fox’s interpretation of a “folksy”, “avuncular” (2015) portrayal. Lincoln is represented close to his people, sometimes wandering unguarded, laden with great concerns and personal sorrow, making him appear touchable. Also, his depiction pairs an attributed high intelligence with a selfless ego, which becomes supremely apparent in episode “Sad Figure Laughing” when Lincoln gives a former rival a seat on the Supreme Court because he is simply the best for this job, showing an enormous lack of vanity.

On the other hand, and equally important as the deliberate selection of subjects and tackled periods of time in the President’s life, is the non-consideration of many matters that did not find their way into the show’s scripts. In my view, Lincoln’s fight for emancipation, including important historical speeches, and his assassination itself are noticeably underrepresented. Fox even gives the example of an altered depiction of Lincoln’s arrival at Richmond in episode “Unwilling Warrior”(2015). In heavy contrast to both historical records and Sandburg’s original description, Wolper refrains from showing cheering freed slaves, thereby willingly neglecting the theme of emancipation. Fox reasons this, which I acknowledge, with the episode’s reference to the political and social environment of the early

nineteen seventies, especially in respect to Vietnam and the Watergate scandal. Applying this to *Sandburg's Lincoln* on a general level means that a potential function of Lincoln's representation is, again, speaking sometimes directly, sometimes rather indirectly, about contemporary (political) issues. This time he does so by turning away from earlier emphases such as a glorification of his fight for emancipation and unification towards a more human side in Lincoln. Fox even speaks of the "surrender of grand hero" (2015) in this context. Hence, I see a possible inducement to be the functionalization of Lincoln to work against political apathy of that time, adapting to the society's anti- and dislike against authorities. Moreover, this conjecture closes the circle to Schwartz assumption of an erosion of Lincoln's authority (2008, 16), which could then have started at this point in time.

The 1980s constitute a further shift in terms of Lincoln's representations and respective functions. Though remaining on the new track of miniseries (*The Blue and the Gray* 1982, *North and South* 1986, and *Gore Vidal's Lincoln* 1988), his representations turned to a more critical examination of motives. In addition, more and more comedy depictions were entering popular media.

*The Blue and the Gray* was a miniseries mixing fact and fiction and broadcast in three parts on CBS in 1982. Its main plot pivots on two families, offering a view on the Civil War through the eyes of a Northern and a Southern clan respectively. The cast of Hollywood legend Gregory Peck alone is evidence for the series' potential popularity (Skow). For the movie star, an admirer of Lincoln, the *Blue and the Gray* was his first TV production (Skow). However, Lincoln's depictions did not make him more than a "cameo character" (O'Connor 1982) with roughly twenty-three minutes of net play time (Molyneaux 221). Overall, it is more the fictional character of the series that makes it a novelty—it did not implicate the indicated topical change so much, as Lincoln's representations rather stick to already discussed functions. For instance, the young politician "winningly delivers a charming little speech" (Reinhart 61), thereby depicting Lincoln as intelligent, eloquent, and close to the people. Furthermore, the by this time established President is represented testing a rifle himself, arguably to represent him as a man of the people and a single-handed man of action. Also, the very same scene shows him leaving the site "gaunt" and "angular" (Skow), which alludes to the previously touched image of a lost human being. On the other hand, Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation as well as his (full-length) delivery of the

Gettysburg Address—which was Peck’s explicit requirement for joining the project (Fishgall 306)—have Lincoln symbolize both themes of freedom and emancipation, even though Peck’s performance related to the Gettysburg Address was criticized by Reinhart (61).

*North and South* is a mini-series consisting of three movies and was broadcast on ABC network. It tells the story of two befriended families from both sides of the Mason-Dixon line and captures the periods before the Civil War (Part I, 1985), the war years (Part II, 1986) and immediately after the war (Part III, 1994). The series was not only a success at the time of its first airing—Jones describes it as “one of the ten highest Nielsen rated miniseries” (3)—it has even retained its popularity until today. It is available on DVD and for online instant watching. Furthermore, a remake is being considered (Moraes). Since Lincoln is only part of the first two episodes, I will limit my discussion to those very parts.

The main plot develops around the friendship between a son of an industrial northern family (“George Hazard” starring James Read) and one of a slave-owning farmer family from the south (“Orry Main”, actor Patrick Swayze). In the course of events, both families become close, intertwined by marriages and eventually tested in times of war. The large numbers of romances and intermixing of history with fanciful fiction made the NY Times call *North and South* “cheap entertainment” (O’Connor 1985). But this makes it even more suitable for this thesis and might explain why this American drama about the American Civil War was even successful in abroad countries such as Germany<sup>55</sup>.

Lincoln is yet again played by experienced Hal Holbrook and has several appearances throughout movies one and two, with a noticeable accumulation of situations in which the president seeks for advice. The first film shows him discussing both the secession crisis and the outline of his First Inaugural Address with Secretary Seward. The talk reveals that Lincoln accepts Seward’s suggestions and personally sees an end of the line in terms of compromises towards the South but tries to refrain from offending Southern Unionists. This first example of external guidance becomes even more apparent in the second film. George Hazard, in the meantime promoted to rank of general, is often depicted providing advice to President Lincoln, both in connection to strategic military and personnel decisions (Reinhart 167).

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<sup>55</sup> Series still regularly broadcast in Germany under the name “Fackeln im Sturm”, which can be translated as “Torches in the Storm” (see “Fackeln”).

Admittedly, seeking advice can be certainly be interpreted as a strong character trait. Not being stuck or gridlocked with one's own ideas shows the ability of self-reflection and making adjustments, especially from a commander-in-chief. However, I do see two different reasons here as the amount and strength of instances seems too overwhelming. First, it might trigger a viewers' questioning of Lincoln's humble and meek image, especially with regard to his more radical draft of his Inaugural Speech. Second, his perpetual reassuring, at the same time, potentially helps boost and upgrade the fictional character of George Hazard. As he counsels the President on so many different occasions, even attributed the idea to bring Grant out of the West to fight Lee (Winfrey), speaks for Hazard's qualities. Above all, the main plot setting gives an understanding to what extent Lincoln's decisions affected friends and families as they imposed vital tests on fathers, brothers, and friends

The four-hour TV miniseries Gore Vidal's *Lincoln* (1988), which is based on Vidal's controversial novel of 1984, covers the complete time of presidency, from Lincoln's unrecognized arrival and inauguration to his assassination. \$8 million of production costs as well as a cast of already well-established actors, such as Sam Waterston (Lincoln) or Mary Tyler Moore (Mary Todd), resulted in a picture that "was a comparable commercial success" (T.J. Brown 2) and received seven Emmy nominations and one actual win. Even though the movie version of *Lincoln* is also accused of lacking historical accuracy (Reinhart 17, Holzer 1988), its take as a partly fictitious "entertaining drama" (Greenough in Holzer 1988) on the both President's private and political life corresponds as well to my definition of popular media through its huge distribution. Holzer assessed at the time of *Lincoln*'s premiere in 1988 "that no Lincoln drama will be as widely viewed" (1988) as this piece of TV history.

In regard to Lincoln's representation and, thereof, deriving functions, the series brings a new facet to play as it takes a step towards what Reinhart calls the President's "dark side" (99)—although the outcome is in my interpretation not as shocking as the description suggests. I agree that Lincoln, overall, was "depicted as a cunning and sometimes deceptive politician, and rather than a simple, folksy man always ready with a joke, he is depicted as a man haunted by personal demons" (98) and that a controversial discussion helped stripping "some of the legend and sentiment" (17). Besides the aspect of the depicted deep private struggle, a presidential quote in the movie fueled the flames about a potential racist side in Lincoln. He is shown saying that he "always believed the colored race to be inferior to the

white”. Notwithstanding that these words are indeed Lincoln’s, its quotation out of both context and true point of its actual utterance make Lincoln appear racist<sup>56</sup>. Furthermore, Lincoln is portrayed as if he required the advice of a young assistant who convinces him to opt for the emancipation of slaves—which is highly criticized by Holzer as well<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, the movie narrates that Lincoln left his eldest son in disagreement after exchanging harsh words before his assassination, suggesting (historically wrong) another unfixed tragedy attended by possible feelings of guilt. Nevertheless, in the main, the sixteenth President is nowhere near being represented as a solely “dark” person, and the series finds enough moments to portray him as a noble, heroic man with seemingly positive character traits—just fighting against the tearing apart of his family, his country, and arguably even himself. Especially with regard to his relentless assistance to his wife Mary Todd, it is she who installs “Lincoln’s death as an act of ultimate sacrifice for the Union” (Holzer 1998), extracting a Messiah image from her husband’s death.

Whereas Vidal’s novel had been criticized for installing a Lincoln image of going ruthlessly into war “in order to eclipse the Founding Fathers and insure his own place in the pantheon of great presidents” (Bayles), I do not observe this effort happening in the broadcast version. What I do see is that Lincoln’s representation takes a step away from a depiction of a great emancipator and joking man, towards at least some critical approaches concerning the issue of slavery and emancipation, which would entail an equally critical approach from the viewer’s perspective on the described issues. However, there are still enough heroic touches in these movies to have a balanced representation of Lincoln in the televised version of Gore Vidal’s *Lincoln*.

Besides the previously discussed various miniseries, which for the most part represented mixtures of fiction and facts, more and more comedic elements that made use of Lincoln image of different sorts were appearing in the 1980s, amongst them well-established running gags in the late night show *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and TV series *Police Squad!* as well as appearances in movies such as *The Big Picture* or *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure*.

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<sup>56</sup> As Holzer states, this statement was made before the signing of the Emancipation.

<sup>57</sup> “. . . likely raise more eyebrows among informed viewers than any other scene in the mini-series” (Holzer 1988).

Johnny Carson, host of the *Tonight Show*, was one of the pioneers when it comes to bringing Lincoln into the field of TV comedy. His late night show ran under his name from 1962 to 1992 and made the format a very popular element of America's TV nights. His repeated implementation of Lincoln jokes underwent a development and were not very successful in the earlier days of the show. Ed McMahon, the sidekick of the show, reminisces that "from time to time Johnny would put on a stovepipe hat, a beard, and play Abraham Lincoln" (McMahon 94). They would often fail with the jokes and receive boos or awkward silence from the audience, but would be recovering by asking "too soon?" ("Comedy"), thereby acknowledging the audience's discomfort. In the 1980s then, one example suggests that the audience seemed to react in a more relaxed way when Carson shared one of his classic Lincoln puns in 1981, showing a potential evolution towards normalization:

Lincoln's birthday reminds me of my old girlfriend back in Nebraska. Gina Staturoy. ... She went to Lincoln High and she was voted Miss Lincoln, because everybody took a shot at her at the balcony. (Macks)

Since, this time, Carson scored by getting the laughs from his audience, I see it as a potential example of him being successful in conveying Lincoln to comedy.

A reoccurring presence of Lincoln in the opening credits of 1982 *Police Squad!* does not alone satirize other original introductory sequences of that time, but it makes use of Lincoln to snatch a humorous effect. With a total of only six episodes, *Police Squad!* might be considered rather short-lived, but it would later become appreciated among experts. Simpsons' creator Groening once called it "before its time" (Sollie 2013) and it further led to three "sequel" movies (*The Naked Gun*) with Leslie Nielsen in the leading role again.<sup>58</sup> In *Police Squad!*'s spoof of typical openings of popular crime series of that time, Lincoln is shown from behind, sitting in the Presidential box at Ford's Theater on the night of his assassination. But instead of getting murdered, two shots miss him as they only blow his typical hat off. He then quickly turns around and fires back at the (unseen) John Wilkes Booth. In the meantime, an announcer introduces the cast "...and Rex Hamilton as Abraham Lincoln!"—but Lincoln appears nowhere but in this intro. Here, Lincoln is used in a stagy way, installing him as an invulnerable action hero—teasing the whole genre of contemporary

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<sup>58</sup> The opening scene reached cult status, e.g. rendered homage by family guy (Episode 14, Season 4, 6 November 2005).

crime series on TV. But not only television had Lincoln incorporated, the sixteenth President returned to the big screen in the late eighties of the nineteenth century as well.

*Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989) is a high-school comedy telling the story of two southern Californian "airheaded rock star wannabes" (Canby) who have one day to work on a history presentation to pass the class and avoid being held back in high school, which would also result in the end of their beloved rock band. Miraculously, a time traveling character appears and helps them do their research on site. It is not just that they meet historical figures such as Joan d'Arc, Beethoven, Sigmund Freud, or Abraham Lincoln in person, they even take the history-forming icons back to 1989 and integrate them in their report. Even though partly pelted with withering reviews (Hinsen, Canby), the movie has become very popular over time. It inspired a sequel movie (*Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*, 1991) as well as a cartoon (1990) and live action series (1992), both titled just as the original movie. Its availability on DVD, BluRay, and web portals such as Amazon Instant Video or Netflix might have contributed to the movie's ongoing relevance. For instance, sequences are used as teasers or statements in today's social media, such as Tumblr or Facebook.

Overall, Abraham Lincoln is positively depicted, even though in the exaggerated and atypical style which comedies are based on. He breaks out of his "mock deadly seriousness" (Reinhart 55) when putting a fresh curl on his Gettysburg Address during Bill and Ted's oral report in front of the assembled students. This facet makes him, to my view, come across as "a cool guy" and helps him win the hearts of the audience. I agree with Reinhart who claims that everyone treats Lincoln with the highest respect and that light jokes, such as Lincoln offering to spell his name to a police officer, do not harm the President's reputation at all. Furthermore, as dumb as the student might appear, and they seem to know nothing about anything, they still recognize that Lincoln must bear great historical significance—which supports giving Lincoln's representation a positive spin as well. On the other hand, Lincoln adapts the boys' credo "be excellent to each other" to his speech, which potentially shows his personal approval and dignifies the students' attitude.<sup>59</sup>

The second movie featuring the president of the Civil War era that premiered in 1989 was *The Big Picture*, a comedy that aimed at satirizing the Hollywood film industry. Its main character Nick, a freshly graduated director, struggles to get his career started in Hollywood.

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<sup>59</sup> He also said "party on dudes" to the students, which has been used as a meme on the Internet frequently.

After even being prepared to compromise his own ideals and principals and willing to take any job to gain a living, he is offered to film a “buddy picture” featuring Abraham Lincoln and Babe Ruth. The figure of Lincoln only appears in a rather short imaginative sketch of this absurd idea of pairing the sixteenth President of the United States and a baseball legend, which appears to have its origin in trying to bring together the “two most beloved figures in American history”<sup>60</sup>. The imagery of the scene, which goes by the name of “Abe and Babe”, has the two icons chit-chatting while Lincoln carves a bat for Ruth outside a log cabin. When Lincoln pitches the ball and Ruth hits it far afield, Lincoln would turn to the camera saying “That’s the Babe for you!”. The scene then cuts at this moment, turning away from the movie within the movie, and shows Nick in absolute distrust about what he just witnessed.

I see a potential function in Lincoln’s representation in a support of the movie’s main concern, namely mocking the movie industry. The scene exemplifies, by using two of probably America’s most beloved public figures, Hollywood’s lack of interest in reaching a certain niveau or quality and, at the same time, stopping at nothing in order to gain a profit. In this context, Lincoln is not made fun of but, in my opinion, the viewer is more likely to feel pity on his imposed role. Corrigan sets up a connection to the issue of gender, arguing that this representation “is also a serious comment about generic representations of history and the hysterical but impossible need to stabilize male identities within history” (138). Rob Edelmänn brings in another interpretation of a possible function of Lincoln’s appearance, which I share to some extent. He claims “that diamond heroes are among the most recognizable figures in all of American history” (Edelmänn), depicting the president as a fan of the baseball industry in general and the Yankees in particular. Considering baseball one of the oldest sports in US history, this depiction would align to the idea of representing Lincoln as “an American man”.

The last examples presented have in common, and I follow Reinhart’s observation here, that the increasing number of representations lampooning Lincoln serves as an indication of Americans not taking its former president as seriously as previous generations did (Reinhart 18), indicating a rather relaxed interaction. However, none of these depictions are violating or aggressive, so that I still see a fundamental respect in said representations. A function shared by all cultural references is the potential use for creating laughter. Considering that Lincoln

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<sup>60</sup> 1:05.11 into the movie



himself is attributed with a humorous character, this idea does not seem to be too far-fetched and rather flatters the former President.

What had started in the 1980s would increase in the following decade towards the end of the twentieth century. The 1990s generated a wealth of Lincoln representations, which spanned virtually all domains of popular media, for instance appearances in cartoons, TV series, comedy shows, or commercials—following the trend of lampooning and even adding first examples of ridiculing. Especially cartoons were to feature more and more allusions to Lincoln. With the discussion of representations of Lincoln in *the Simpsons*, *Animaniacs*, *Ren and Stimpy* as well as *Dexter's Lab*, I certainly do not cover all animated references to the sixteenth president, but they shall suffice to be exemplary for the emerging trend of using Lincoln images in cartoons in the nineteen nineties.

*The Simpsons* episode “Mr. Lisa goes to Washington” (season 3, episode 2, 1991) offers a satirical view on US politics in general, following the 1939 motion picture’s journey of Mr. Smith. Invited to Washington to take part in an essay contest on “what makes America great”, Lisa Simpson witnesses a congressman accepting bribes, destroying her beliefs in democracy. She turns to the Lincoln Memorial and tries to seek advice (“Honest Abe, show me the way”) but has to realize that a plethora of people are addressing the stony Lincoln as well, partially with absolute dispensable questions. In the later course, Lisa decides to write a new essay and to speak the truth about corruption, thereby initiating the arrest of the bribee, which restores her faith in American democracy. In my view, Lincoln takes on a father function, representing the “normative citizenship” (Rubenstein 2). Cynically, he has to endure being exposed to comparably insignificant questions from the people that revolve around fashion advice (“Do you think I should grow a moustache?”) or house purchase decisions. As Reinhart, who sees a criticism of the tendency to permanently questioning oneself “what would have Lincoln done”, and interprets Lincoln’s depiction as deftly communicating “I’m not there, do not ask me”, I also see a sad interpretation in the drawing of the statue’s face. All in all, I agree with Koski’s view on the underscoring of “how cynicism and apathy have diluted the idealism that drives Smith”.

Another Lincoln reference is made in *the Simpsons*’ episode “Selma’s choice” (season 4, episode 13, 1993), in which a robotic version of the President performs “The Beer Hall of Presidents Rap” at Duff Gardens. It uses the famous opening line of the Gettysburg Address

“Four score and seven years ago”, but quickly changes the lyrics to a commercial rap song praising Duff beer. While Lisa expresses her consternation (“this is a disgrace”), she indirectly points out a potential function of this Lincolnian representation. In my opinion, the former statesman has been run down to a slave of the advertising industry that uses one of the most impressive speeches in US history to sell beer.

In *Animaniacs*’ episode “Four Score and Seven Migraines Ago” (season 1, number 21, 1993), the animated version of the Warner Brothers (and sister) help write Lincoln his famous Gettysburg Address on a train on their way to the battlefield. After trying out and eventually dismissing lots of opening lines that would later become parts of famous historical speeches<sup>61</sup>, Lincoln is not satisfied and yields to despair. Luckily, the animanics show up and suggest some „great openings“ along with some motivational pushes<sup>62</sup> as they remind him of what he already achieved and will achieve<sup>63</sup>. They eventually offer Lincoln a superb opening line which he elaborates on to give his famous speech.

By and large, Lincoln is indeed depicted as stressed out by his great task and the annoying kids; however, he still reacts kindly and fatherly (Koski 2012). The fact that the siblings primarily arrived to get Lincoln’s autograph shows their unrestricted admiration, which also becomes evident when they want him to sign next to Atilla the Hun “for contrast”. Having Lincoln rejecting so many, to the modern viewer, great lines for his speech, bears potential of attributing striving to perfection to him. Although his self-doubting nature might lead to a negative interpretation, I personally favor a positive approach, awarding this depiction a function of signaling others that even Lincoln was not perfect, had doubts, and needed encouragement and ideas from others.

The episode “An Abe Divided” of the cartoon series *Ren and Stimpy* (season 3, episode 37, 1993) deals with the two main characters taking on the job of guarding the Lincoln Memorial. When they overhear that a treasure is hidden in the memorial’s head, they put aside their assigned task and do not even shy away from sawing its head off. Only finding disappointing caramel corn makes them realize that they have to find an alternative for the destroyed original head. After bitterly failing and facing a probable punishment, they start praying for

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<sup>61</sup> “Ich bin ein Gettysburger”, “we have nothing to fear, but fear itself”, “ask not what your country can do for you”.

<sup>62</sup> “you cannot give up without a fight”.

<sup>63</sup> (references to posthum homages, naming of tunnel, face on coin, federal holiday)

help. As a result, a ghostly Lincoln appears holding his head underneath his arm—mirroring the current broken status of the memorial—and ends up beating Ren and Stimpy black and blue. As Lincoln appears as the well-known statue of the Lincoln Memorial as well as a ghost, both depictions make the presidential representations look ludicrous. His statue is defecated on by pigeons, and if it was not enough to have him equipped with a feature that allows visitors to have him pick his nose for five cents, it is also pointed that he leaves boogers underneath his presidential chair. The ridiculing continues when the guards eventually try to restore the statue by putting portrayals of Santa Clause, Fidel Castro, an elk, the statue of liberty, and even a dumpster on the intact body of the sculpture. Furthermore, Lincoln is taken for Santa Clause even in his original shape. The viewer likely does not blame the ghost version of Lincoln for taking revenge, but such a brutal depiction of the sixteenth president seems to usher in a new era of depictions. However, besides the ridicule, I still estimate potential for a socio-critical approach. The mechanical nose-picking device in combination with the tourist equipped with Lincoln masks, hats, and balloons, could possibly be considered a critique of the excessive merchandising and hype for the bearded president—getting in line with my interpretation of Simpson’s episode “Selma’s Choice”.

Cartoon Network’s *Dexter’s Laboratory* is a comic science fiction series about a highly intelligent boy and his incredible inventions that he develops in his secret lab. In the episode “Rushmore Rumble” (part of episode 26, season 2, 1998), Dexter and his rival classmate Mandark bring the Mount Rushmore versions of Lincoln and Washington to life and let them fight against each other. Stone Lincoln, requickened in Frankenstein-like with bolts on neck, is controlled by Dexter while the schoolboy sits on the president’s shoulder and both rocky statesmen fight heavily armed. But after a while, the stony Presidents realize that they have a lot in common and are “evenly matched”. They eventually decide to lay down their arms—to Dexter’s and Mandark’s displeasure. The way I see it, Abraham Lincoln is depicted twofold. On the one hand, his exaggerated Frankenstein-like depiction—with an angular face and body, his voice deep in a manly way, and his typical stovepipe hat including a missile mechanism—makes him appear like a brutal fighter. From this perspective, the living Rushmore Lincoln is featured as a weapon of war—a possible allusion to his role as commander in chief. However, he finally overcomes the external control and leaves the battlefield in peace when he realizes that he is still “Honest Abe” as he “can’t tell a lie”. With a positive appraisal in mind, on the other hand, I see a potential function of this Lincoln

representation in opposing an ongoing utilization and bringing-under-control of the sixteenth President. As Dexter tries to make use of him as a brutal war machine, this attempt fails. In the end, Washington and Lincoln, arguably symbolizing the two greatest Presidents in US history, join hands and refuse to fight—emphasizing both Lincoln’s honesty and dovishness. Above all, the fight between the first and the sixteenth President might also serve as a critique of the comparisons, debates and rankings between the two, trying to find out who was the “better” head of state (Schlesinger). Hence, I interpret the ending of this cartoon as an arbitration saying that both presidents were equally matched and, thus, indirectly calling for a stop, since according to the storyline, neither of them would have any interest in being part of such debate.

Other than the previously discussed depictions in cartoon series, Lincoln has at least two appearances worth mentioning in comedy related science-fiction series in television towards the end of the last century. One of them occurs in *Red Dwarf*, while the second appearance takes place in *Downwind from Gettysburg*.

In 1991, a wax droid version of Abraham Lincoln has a cameo appearance in the comedy science fiction series *Red Dwarf* (Season 4, Episode 6 “Meltdown!”). In my opinion, this chapter not only is a pastiche of *Westworld* (Juliette), but also bears enough potential to be considered a general spoof on the science fiction genre and, more importantly, allows references to the previously discussed *Star Trek*’s “the Savage Curtain”. Once again, the former President is part of a fight of good versus evil, similarly allocated to the group of the “upright”. The storyline is very “over-the-top” and deals with a planet of wax figures at war. In my view, the comedic element, sometimes very pointed and sarcastic, matters most. Wax droid Lincoln, fully equipped with all relevant clothes and accessories such as hat, bow-tie, and suit, helps the main characters escape from prison. On the one hand, he is depicted yelling at most times but, on the other hand, there are also gentle and incorruptible elements present. For instance, the waxy president flings remarks and phrases around as a strong commander would do, e.g. “You may break our bones but you will never break our spirits.” This leads me to see a positive depiction with a potential function of installing him as a “good” and admirable historical person, as he is teamed with Mother Teresa and Ghandi. However, the show closes very sarcastically: with almost everyone dead except the visiting protagonists, one of the survivors expresses his utmost satisfaction about the restoration of freedom—even

if there was no one left to enjoy this freedom anymore. Here, I see a possible reminder of the side effects of war in general and a criticism of the same—especially when taking into account the then ongoing Gulf War with British and American involvement.

The robot Lincoln representation of Ray Bradbury's *Downwind from Gettysburg* backs a bit away from pure ridicule and exaggeration. Originally published as a short story in 1969, it was staged in Bradbury's popular TV series "The Ray Bradbury Theater" (season 6, episode 10, 1992). It is a tale of a museum director, whose affection to Lincoln has its roots in his great-grandfather's witnessing Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as a child, who builds an animatronic President for an exhibition.<sup>64</sup> During its premiere, the robotic main attraction is assassinated by a man that goes by the name of Booth. After a first wave of fury, the manager then decides to punish attention-starved Booth by denying him the reward of fame for this crime as he compels Booth to never speak about the incident. In the final scene, the manager turns toward the sideways tilting Lincoln machine and witnesses how it comes to "life" again, rises to an upright position and starts to recite the Gettysburg Address again—with what appears to be his final breath.

According to my interpretation, the use of an animatronic facsimile of Lincoln and its assassination potentially shows that though history might repeat itself, a great idea will endure and overcome attacks, i.e., murdering Lincoln in 1865 neither resulted in silencing his words nor making him disappear from the American public consciousness. In the case of *Downwind from Gettysburg*, he is resurrected in form of a robot that enables the viewer to travel to the past by making use of Lincoln as "a positive force" (Stupple 184). Even after being shot, a virtual second assassination, the 1992 Lincoln comes to life again, arguably representing the inextinguishable idea and conception of the sixteenth President. Furthermore, I see Lincoln presented as the personification of perfection. Though Booth mainly speaks of machines when defending his deed, he talks about Lincoln similarly: "[I am] jealous of anything that works, anything that lasts, anything that's perfect. . . I could never be as perfect as that...that eternal President." Thereby, he expresses his indirect admiration and, at the same time, underlines the everlasting character of Lincoln. Additionally, the introductory scene of the child (manager's great grandfather) sitting on his father's shoulder, trying to grasp Lincoln's words that are

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<sup>64</sup> Bradbury stated that he was inspired to write this story when talking with Walt Disney about the robotic Lincoln of Disneyland (Seed 29.)

carried by the wind far back to where he was standing, also emphasizes the act of admiration this piece of TV history encapsulates. Hence, I see the mechanical reproduction of Lincoln as a reminder to the American nation of its perpetual ideals, mostly those found in the Gettysburg Address such as freedom, liberty, and equality.

The fact that this positive depiction backs away from the otherwise arising ridicule might be explained by its original development in the 1960s on the one hand and an arguable attempt to bring back the formerly attributed attributes to the Lincoln of the 1990s. The ongoing trend of seeing off pure noble depictions continues with further peculiar, thought-provoking, and jocular representations in TV shows, commercials, and comics.

In the segment “Lincoln and His Time Machine”, which was part of a special episode<sup>65</sup> of *Saturday Night Live* in 1992, the President accidentally builds a time machine and travels to the past, trying to assassinate John Wilkes Booth on different occasions. The several attempts make Booth become more and more frightened and eventually the closing credits reveal that Lincoln was killed by Booth and that doctor’s found “a black jack, some piano wire and several sticks of dynamite” in Lincoln’s pockets. Above all, as already mentioned, I see the hunt for a laugh. However, as this sketch depicts Lincoln trying to avoid his fate but virtually determining it by his own actions, I see a potential criticism as well. A possible function could be that the President should be made responsible for being shot as a consequence of his own actions. Even the invention of the time machine does not make him appear too smart as he admits this happened by accident while he was building a paddle boat—which is, in my opinion, not the most appropriate conceivable Presidential hobby. Moreover, historical deliverances are turned upside down as Booth is displayed as a happy child, gentle adolescent, and loving adult each time Lincoln tries to kill him. All in all, “Lincoln and His Time Machine” is another piece of comedy that does not refrain from ridiculing the President.

The emancipator of the slaves is also part of *Mr Show*’s satirical ridicule of America’s advertising industry (“Please Don’t Kill Me”). The sketch, which is divided into three parts (“Mayostard”, “Mustardayonnaise”, “Mustmayo-stardayonnaise”), is about the product’s sublime benefit of immense time saving when preparing sandwiches by having mustard and mayonnaise in one single jar. In the second fragment, Mustardayonnaise, a white and yellow

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<sup>65</sup> “Toonces, the Cat Who Could Drive a Car”.

clothed Lincoln frees the enchained “two jar slaves” from a dark prison, even shoots two guards with his machine gun, and is finally celebrated and carried shoulder high by the ex-inmates. Though this enactment, to my view, clearly alludes to his image as emancipator, portraying him as hard bitten freedom bringer, the white suite, white bow-tie, yellow vest, and a yellow and white striped hat, makes him look more like a mascot and stultifies said honorable image and reverses his ultimate achievements. In terms of potential functions, I mainly see a critique of the advertisement industry. Not only does the product itself seems totally useless, but more importantly, the commercial business does not refrain from making use of an enslaved Lincoln to sell products no one needs—as if there was nothing else worth being freed but people who have to open two jars in the morning in their sandwich making habits. Moreover, there is just as much potential for consumer criticism. As long as there is a famous person involved, people seem to be credulous and naïve and would buy products they might not really need.

The *Muppets Tonight* picked up the idea of a robotic version of Abraham Lincoln in episode 2.6 (“Paula Abdul”, aired November 2, 1997) in which Muppet Labs scientists present the idea of recreating the sixteenth president after detecting a lack of heroes in society. When Robot Lincoln steps in, he starts malfunctioning quickly and eventually runs amuck through the studio, attacking performers as well as stage decoration. In the final scene, he sits on a wall onstage, obviously sad and claiming that “nobody loves Robot Lincoln”. Paula Abdul is then successful in calming him down by singing “Lean On” with various Muppets and later even Lincoln joining in. As a last point, Muppet “Sam the Eagle” comes on stage and explains the important lesson to be learned that “Heroes cannot be built, they must be born. They cannot be made, they must be shaped by adversity like our fabulous guest star Paula Abdul who took a disaster and turned it into a rather nice number, don’t ya think?” For this storyline, I see various potential functions in terms of representing Lincoln in this Muppets episode. First, as clearly stated by the Muppets scientists, the automaton president is recreated for the purpose of filling the gap of a hero lacking in society. This is a very positive connotation. Second, as this resurrection miserably fails and the robot causes mayhem, this hero role is arguably fueled with doubts. In a third act, heroism is explained and transferred to Abdul, who had previously suffered from health problems (Breu and Harrington). Given these points, I maintain that the viewer is potentially encouraged to think again about the predominant heroic image of Lincoln, or even other historical figures. Conversely, the viewer

might not detach the heroic image from Lincoln but realizes that historical idols cannot be rebuilt and that there might be no need to search in history books as there are heroes around in today's society.

*The New Adventures of Abraham Lincoln* is a comic book by Scott McCloud and was published in 1998. Even though the author himself admits that it was hated, the work nevertheless offers an interesting plot, which is described by McCloud on his homepage:

The story followed 10-year old Byron Johnson and his friend Marcie as they try to expose an imposter Abraham Lincoln before he can reclaim and 'finish' his term as President of the United States. Halfway through, the real Abraham Lincoln is resurrected to help them, and then it turns out the whole thing was an alien plot. (McCloud)

Throughout the book's storyline both the two Lincolns take up a leading part. On the one hand, a rather young-looking resurrected version emerges to fight alongside young black boy Byron, the main character and likely voice of reason of the story. On the other hand, there is an alien-controlled version that serves as current President. It is the latter figure that I assign two hypothetical functions as I see in him the greater potential of a truly functional representation. First, as the American people are depicted as a rather credulous, naïve mass, I see the seized extraterrestrial version as a symbol for manipulative, demagogic politics and assessing the menaces of an uninformed public response to such a political environment. A concrete reference to the then governing Bush administration seems plausible and possible. Second, speaking in more general terms, I fully agree with both C. Smith and Engel-Cox who claim that Lincoln is potentially used to undermine the message that citizens should not follow symbolism just to pretend patriotism, but reflect and judge the original meaning behind since any kind of those icons might become just ends in themselves—demanding to not allow those symbols become larger than what they originally intended to signify. Furthermore, this criticism of taking symbolism over meaning might also apply to the above-mentioned Bush administration of 1998. In addition, the very last scene of the comic bears potential for showing that some paths of history are just untraceable; which makes me follow Smith's line of interpretation: Byron discusses with a come-alive Lincoln statue if he truly believed in his commanding days that Negroes were equal to whites. As Lincoln dodges the issue, Byron leaves the monument and promptly it turns lifeless. This last scene potentially leaves the



reader “with the reminder that some historical truths are unknowable, while some historical characters are at least as compromised as they’re commendable” (Smith), leaving it up to the consumer to continue interpreting and critically investigating what is “served” as admirable symbols because “history is much more rich than the prevailing clichés” (Cox).

*Celebrity Death Match* was a “claymation” serials aired on MTV that had several celebrities fighting “to the death” in a wrestling set up that would be enriched with exaggerated styles, i.e., using brutal weapons and surviving severe injuries. In its second season (1999), Abraham Lincoln competed in the show when fighting George Washington in a “4th of July Celebration” special. Besides the principle objective of being entertaining and humorous, the battle alludes to the question “who is the best” of all presidents. A number of references and clichés about Lincoln and Washington characterize the general structure of the fight event already dripping with patriotism. For example, the divided audience is either wearing stovepipe hats or wigs and the announcer introduces Lincoln as the “Gettysburg Grappler”, “Rowdy Railsplitter”, and “tallest president of the United States”. Whereas Washington is accompanied by Richard Nixon, Lincoln comes along with Teddy Roosevelt. When Roosevelt wants Lincoln to drink some brandy during a break, Lincoln does not approve. It is Washington who takes action, but Lincoln does not respond in the beginning of the battle. It is only when the first President steps on his stovepipe hat that Lincoln has had enough. Furthermore, hints about the inability of both presidents to tell a lie and their common skills in using an axe are shown. Also, Lincoln makes a reference to his house divided speech after losing one of his legs (“a body divided cannot stand”). After a sheer massacre, the still alive heads of all of Lincoln, Washington, Nixon, and Roosevelt are neatly paired on top of a lighting bridge above the ring, clearly adverting to the Mount Rushmore monument. In relation to possible functions, the goal of creating laughter has already been established. However, I see more potential purposes in this *Celebrity Death Match* episode. Since this “4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration” features Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, it arguably has the two greatest presidents involved and considers the question of whether the first or sixteenth President was the greatest—mirroring a reappearing debate amongst the American people. Besides, having a thoroughly favored president as his sidekick and, beyond that, rebuking him at his leisure, shows an even greater greatness of Lincoln. Furthermore, the stovepipe president does not counterpunch directly when under initial attack, which leads me to assume that he is represented as a commander-in-chief using force only when absolutely

necessary. During the grand showdown, fireworks lit by Lincoln get out of control and have everyone's heads ending up on the lighting stage—a probable hint that sometimes initiated things get out of hands and control. Though applicable to many different fields, it could follow the excessive and overstated celebrations and self-adulation of the American past. Also, those vivid heads still hanging above the audience might symbolize the present omnipresence of long dead fathers of the nation.

In conclusion, Lincoln was an omnipresent character and continually represented in a variety of popular media from the time of his death until the end of the twentieth century. The comprising demonstration of generic representations presented here has shown a steady transition of their respective potential functions throughout this period.

Above all, as introduced earlier as primary functions of popular media, most examples potentially either mirror social issues or even are concerned to answer society's needs. Starting with the conveyance of his great achievements and iconic representations as the Great Emancipator or Savior of the Union in motion pictures right after his death, his representations later turned to a depiction of the (self-made) man of the people. Over time, as connections via contemporary witnesses were snapped, representations of Lincoln were more and more made use of to address contemporary issues not necessarily connected to Lincoln's lifetime. In this connection, he was either transported in the relevant time period (time travelling, animated versions, supernatural phenomena) to act in his own person or pictured as a guiding light-house shining from the past to present. It was not before the 1980s that negative depictions started to emerge. Towards the end of the century, Lincoln's depictions were increasingly used to generate humor; initially commencing with a more sublime touch, it eventually turned to a trend of ridicule over fun at a later stage. However, at the same time, I have encountered a variety of depictions making use of the former president to demonstrate against current issues, such as the advertising and film industries getting off course or the people in general for setting wrong priorities. Positive depictions have been found in all periods and genres, but with a downward trend, which leaves me curious about its further development after the turn of the millennium.

This chapter is to serve as a preparatory discourse leading to the main analysis of this thesis, which concentrates on the time frame from the year 2000 to 2015. I see it helpful in order to demonstrate the progress of exemplary representations. It will now be interesting to see if the

trend of ridiculing continues or even increases, which functional representations will re-appear, and what new functions will emerge in the course of the analysis of potential functions of Lincoln's popular media representations in the twenty-first century. I will particularly pay attention to distinctions and changes around the year 2009, whose immense significance has already been outlined sufficiently.

The chronological outline of twentieth century representation was almost congruent with the gradual emergence of different types of media. As a consequence, at the turn of the century all relevant media (except those texts to be found on the Internet) are established. Thus, I decide to refrain from a strict chronological listing when exploring the twenty-first century, but use a classification according to functions as the outcomes of this chapter offer a categorization into three main categories: glorifying aspects mainly found at the beginning of the twentieth century, re-shaping features primarily in the 1960s as well as the 80s to the 90s, and ridiculing depictions starting in the 1980s with mild denigration but more and more turning into ridicule towards the turn of the century. This will be justified in more detail at the beginning of the next chapter.

I would like to point out once again that, if not explicitly mentioned already within the specific discussion of a single object of investigation, whenever I speak of functions of Lincoln representation I am presenting my own interpretation and refer to their potential features only as there is no right, exact, or closed understanding of it. This is why I would like to encourage other scholars at this point already to further develop my lines of thoughts.

#### 4. ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

My investigation of Lincolnian representations in popular media in the *twentieth* century has shown a development from, roughly speaking, an early “emancipator” image to a more and more teased, sometimes even mocked depiction, with various interim stages in between. However, and this is contrary to other interpretations, up to the turn of the millennium there had continuously been positive examples of worshipping traceable.

As introduced in chapter 2.6, I will now provide interpretations of almost 50 representations of the sixteenth president from three popular visual media of the *twenty-first* century that turned out to be most fruitful for this endeavor, i.e., films that all premiered on the big screen of movie theaters; series, shows, commercials, cartoons, and animated series from television as well as comics, memes, and music videos found on the Internet. My study will reveal that there is a Lincoln for everyone available in popular media memory in this new century and that his representations can be classified into three main categories: The Eulogized, the Re-Invented, and the Demystified Lincoln.

The first category of a glorified president refers to classic Lincoln attributes closely connected to his lifetime, both in terms of political achievements and positive character traits. Ovations such as “Savior of the Union”, “Great Emancipator”, “Liberator”, or “First American” follow scholars as for instance Peterson, Guelzo (2009), Reed, or R. White, and thereby mirror the previously discussed governmental feats that were recognized especially in the first half of the twentieth century. Other examples of worshipping features allude to Lincoln’s characteristics with labels such as the hard working “Rail-Splitter”; the self-taught lawyer representing “the Self-Made Man”; or the caring and advising father-figure of “Honest Abe”, who generally seeks for justice and equality (Peterson). I see these latter features, most of which refer to his other-than-presidential life, taken from his illustrated perception that emerged in particular the late nineteenth century. A good example of this first category “The Eulogized Lincoln” is the movie *Lincoln* (2012) that honors both fields of political achievements and character traits. A detailed analysis will demonstrate that the president’s legislative priority of carrying through the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution is as strongly highlighted as his tactical and rhetorical skills as well as his distinguished personality.

The second classification of a “Re-Invented” Lincoln is to include depictions that put the former president into new, mostly modern contexts. Potential functions include drawing comparisons to contemporary persons, using his figure to convey statements and messages, or installing him as a modern hero that tackles new problems and fights new threats. Oftentimes, the depictions invoke the former president as a moral authority for the here and now. This context draws on the attributes of the first category and resonates to benefit from its positive effect. “What would Lincoln do here?” is a typical question that allows the reshaping and reformation of the statesman, enabling the usage of an all-embracing counselor that is (re-) used by various groups to their corresponding and respective needs. For instance, his appearance in a South Park episode has him act as a moral authority and advisor that fights against the common problem of bullying and supports the forsaken people of today’s generation.

The third category of a demystified Emancipator reflects Schwartz’s previously mentioned view of a post-heroic Lincoln image and includes representations that are negatively charged, covering depictions from teasing to mocking to ridicule to bitter hate. As I doubt that Schwartz’s assumption reflects Lincoln’s essential status within popular media memory, representations of this third classification are noticeable but by no means overlay those with a positive connotation. I am aware that in some cases there is only a fine line between a tribute-paying parody and teasing. Furthermore, the question of whether Lincoln can be deconstructed or destroyed after all might be brought up and seems legit—however, I see sufficient evidence for opening this very category and will bring forward reasons about my decision making process. For instance, a rather clear allocation will be possible with Lincoln’s representation as a part of the comedy series “Whitest Kids You Know”, where he is depicted as a selfish, nerve-wrecking, and abusive theater guest.

At this point, I would like to stress a potential transferability between categories one and two since I consider it evident that worshipping depictions of Lincoln’s lifetime have a lot to say about modern times as well. My individual analyses will reveal that this happens in an indirect way and mostly on a subordinate level, which allows inferences of separate categorizations still being justifiable. Furthermore, in some cases, categories blend and artifacts are assignable in multiple ways. For instance, the movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* serves on two different levels, as the storyline is guided by glorifying aspects of actual

lifetime events but at the same time tells a fictional story of the president fighting vampires at night, thereby opening potential functions on recent (social) contexts. This is why I have split the discussion of *Vampire Hunter* and allocated the respective parts to categories one and two.

As a next step, all 48 individual objects of investigation will be introduced and inspected for their suitability in regard to both popularity and content. When speaking about popularity, I refer to my definition of chapter 2.2 and aim to draw conclusions from the different types of media to their respective potential audiences as well. For instance, a Lincoln representation shown on pay-tv is arguably restricted to a more prosperous audience and a web-series virtually available to everyone; a cartoon broadcast after 10 p.m. is inherently addressed to an adult audience and I consider a movie with no admission rating available to the whole family—all of them opening possibilities to different potential functions. A subsequent brief summary is supposed to serve two different goals. First, it helps prove if the content bares adequate potential and is coherent to the purposes of this study, and, second, it shall help the interested reader who is not familiar with the object and assist them in following my line of argumentation when, for instance, watching a two-hour movie appears to be too time-consuming.<sup>66</sup>

Thereafter, as step number two, the previously mentioned single representations in popular media will be analyzed according to the categories also outlined and explicitly described, i.e., the Eulogized, the Re-Invented, and the Demystified Lincoln. Additionally, but rather working as a side project, it is the aim of the analysis to explore whether any distinctive changes occurred around the year 2009 and if there are any differences among the diverse genres in this regard. Since it appears impossible to pin down certain objects to one specific year of origin<sup>67</sup>, I regard this endeavor as a secondary side benefit only.

### *Popular Media in the Focus*

For this overview, I have arranged said genres of media according to their order of development within the twentieth century (as referred to in chapter 3) since I feel that setting up a classification based on their alleged importance too arbitrary. This means that films from and for movie theaters will be introduced and tested for their popularity first, followed by

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<sup>66</sup> In case the reader is familiar with the object of investigation, I suggest continuing with the respective analysis in chapter 4.2.

<sup>67</sup> As will be outlined, the development of the movie Lincoln took more than 12 years, for example.

pieces of media primarily made for the TV screen. As a third step, I will focus on objects found on the World Wide Web.

### *Films in Movie Theaters*

In 2014, roughly 40,000 movie theaters existed in the US, representing an increase of 4,000 since the turn of the century (“Number”), which serves as a hint for an at least steady popularity amongst the American people and its cineastes. It is no surprise that Lincoln can be found in various cinema movies, sometimes in leading positions (*Lincoln*, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*), sometimes in a more supporting role (*Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*, *The Conspirator*). This very category has been installed as an independent one because I claim that there is a difference between films just made for TV or video release since those premiered on the big screen inherently bear a bigger potential of popularity with its associated advertisements, trailers, and interviews. Furthermore, most cinema blockbusters will be shown on Pay TV, cable, DVD, and streaming devices (even pirated copies) later on, which emphasizes the wider potential audiences. This makes it arguably a strong category with numerous probable points of contact with a variety of viewers.

*Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (2009, Shawn Levy) is the sequel to the movie *Night at the Museum*, which had its cinematic debut three years before. Both were directed and produced by Shawn Levy. The comedy features actor Ben Stiller as Larry Daley, former night watchman of the *American Museum of Natural History* and at the time of the sequel a successful businessman. In *Battle of the Smithsonian*, Daley pays his former workplace a visit and discovers that the exhibits—that become alive at nights and that he became friends with in the preceding movie—are to be replaced with modern artefacts and thus forever stored away in the Federal Archive under the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. After having spent one last night with his former companions, Daley receives a call from one of the exhibits the following night. Jedediah, his old miniature cowboy friend, cries for help as the New York artefacts seem to be attacked by several archived villains, among them Al Capone, Napoleon Bonaparte, Ivan the Terrible, and leader villain pharaoh Kahmunrah. Daley sets out for Washington and is eventually able to join the fight. He gets support from Amelia Earheart, American aviation pioneer, who has also been revived, as well as other historical figures—including the come-to-life statue of the Lincoln Memorial. In the end, the evil antagonists are defeated by the united forces. Daley sells his firm and uses the proceeds to reopen the

*American Museum of Natural History*, bringing back all the original artefacts from the capital. Then even open to public at night, the artefacts are allowed to come alive and interact with the visitors, entertaining an astonished crowd that thinks the artefacts are only animated.

Despite its rather mixed reviews<sup>68</sup>, the family adventure film can be classified as a box office success since it grossed almost three times its budget (“Box Office”). It has reached a high potential viewership due to its wide release in up to 4,101 movie theaters (“Night at the Museum – Mojo”) as well as on DVD and BluRay. Furthermore it has been available on HBO and amazon instant on demand. The Smithsonian Museums potentially benefits from links with the movie as they have been offering special guided tours that might have contributed to boosting both their own visitor figures and the film’s popularity (Tobias, “Night at the Museum – American History”) Additionally, Pipeworks Software developed an action-adventure video game based on the movie that is available on many platforms, e.g. PC, Wii, Nintendo DS, or Xbox 360. Sam Bishop of IGN described it “solid”, “educational”, and “fun” (Bishop 2015).

Abraham Lincoln appears in the form of a come to life version of the Lincoln Memorial at three different occasions in the course of the movie. His first emergence takes place 61 minutes into the film as an example of eulogy, when Daley and Earheart seek a hiding place at the Lincoln Memorial (figure 1, appendix). He re-appears later on in order to join the battle against the army of ancient soldiers in one of the museums, which results in my main classification as a Re-Invented Lincoln who is fighting new problems. Finally, the living Lincoln statue shows up for a third time towards the end of the movie, as it is shown standing between the marble columns of the memorial, commenting on the scenery. Here, I see an implementation of a role model status, hence, joining the classification of a newly established role for Lincoln, this time classifiable as a caring father figure for modern times.

The motion picture *The Conspirator* (2011, Robert Redford) is considered a historical drama film (Jenkins, Scott 2011). It was produced by *The American Film Company*, which stands for, as self-defined, historical authenticity with the motto “witness history”. Although the original film title does not mention the name Lincoln explicitly, the movie poster features a

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<sup>68</sup> As of January 2015: 5,9/10 at Imdb.com, 44% freshness at RottenTomatoes.com, 42% metascore at Metacritics.com.



graphical adaptation of his face taken from the statue of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C (see appendix, fig. 2). Additionally, the film was released in the United States on April 15, 2011, the 146<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the former president—leaving no doubt about the strong connection between the movie and the sixteenth head of the U.S.A. Moreover, Germany and Scandinavian countries decided to make use of the name “Lincoln” in their respective translations of the movie title<sup>69</sup>.

Even though the production company claims to stand for true history—which is, in my opinion, impossible to achieve—the movie can still be considered popular for the purpose of this thesis. First, it was shown in movie theaters all around the world (“Release Info Lincoln Verschwörung”), thereby reaching a potential wide audience. With an estimated worldwide gross of US\$15 Million (“The Conspirator”) it is more than likely that it has not only been watched by specialists but by a diverse audience. Third, the film makes use of the Internet and social media to interact with its potential viewers as there are official trailers available on YouTube, iTunes, and yahoo movies. Also, an official Facebook page is accessible and received more than 33,000 likes. Furthermore, the official homepage<sup>70</sup> is structured in a very interactive way, including a blog by Robert Redford, a picture app, links to social media sites such as Facebook or twitter, a Q&A section, and even study guides. And it also works the other way around: the Internet community talks about the movie and rates it on pages such as imdb.com or rottentomatoes.com.

*The Conspirator* deals with the story of Lincoln’s assassination and its aftermath through the eyes of lawyer Frederick Aiken who defends the lone charged woman Mary Surratt before a military tribunal. She runs a boarding house and is accused of conspiring—together with seven men, among them their son, who was able to escape the manhunt—to kill the president, vice president, and secretary of state. After Aiken’s initial adverse and negative position towards Mary Surratt, he eventually realizes that she is rather being used as a bait to help the authorities catch her son and to present the public a scapegoat since the defender’s witnesses seem to be manipulated and the judges of the military tribunal biased. In the end, Aiken is indeed successful in creating doubt among the members of the tribunal and even manages to get a writ of habeas corpus in order to have Mrs. Surrat prosecuted by a civil court. However,

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<sup>69</sup> German title: “Die Lincoln Verschwörung“, Swedish title: “The Conspirator - Mordet på Abraham Lincoln”

<sup>70</sup> [conspiratorthemovie.com](http://conspiratorthemovie.com)

newly inaugurated president Johnson overrules the writ so that Mrs. Surratt and three other conspirators are sentenced to death and executed.

As Lincoln is assassinated very early in the movie, his enduring character and views serve as a kind of moral umbrella and guiding value to the storyline, which leads me to place it into the category of a Re-Invented president as he mainly serves as a moral instance for “his” posterity.

In the genre movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012, dir. Timur Bekmambetov<sup>71</sup>), the sixteenth president seeks revenge for his mother’s death and secretly fights vampires, thereby eventually saving the Union from this threat. It can be considered a popular movie in the definition applied in this thesis because of various indications. After three and a half months of production, the film held its premiere in New York City, on 18 June 2012 (“Release Info Vampire Hunter”). As of October 2012, on the eve of the release of the DVD and Blu-ray, the revenue of the movie already exceeded its estimated budget of \$70,000,000 by fifty percent (“Box Office Vampire Hunter”). Thus, I consider it a popular movie in terms of reaching a wide audience. Newspapers and magazines from all across the country found it worthy of review, among them *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, , the *Los Angeles Time*, the *Rolling Stone Magazine*, or *Time Magazine*. Yet, it is not important how this movie was rated; it is sufficient for my purpose to underline its wide-spread circulation and popular interest by non-specialists, i.e., the target group of the everyday newspaper reader and thereby reaching a wide general audience.

Seth Graham-Smith, author of the original book and writer of the screenplay, states in his audio commentary, which is available on Blu-ray, that he was inspired to work on this project in respect of the huge popularity of both Lincoln’s bicentennial birthday and the vampire stories of *Twilight* whenever he gave an autograph session in bookstores for his preceding best-selling novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* in 2009. Just combining the “two hottest things in literature”<sup>71</sup> provided a good chance of becoming popular.

A closer look at social media websites connected to this movie underlines its widespread circulation and popularity. For example, the two top search results for “Lincoln Vampire Hunter” on youtube.com show video trailers of the movie that have been watched by over

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<sup>71</sup> Audio comment on DVD

seven million and four million people respectively (JoBlo Movie Trailers). On Facebook, more than 350,000 “like” the official page of the movie and many Internet users have socially interacted by posting comments and starting vivid discussions. According to imdb.com, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* was referenced in numerous shows; among them such established ones as *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (episodes #20.167 and 20.169) and *Late Show with David Letterman* (episode #19.157). Moreover, the motion picture was spoofed in the film *30 Nights of Paranormal Activity with the Devil Inside the Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and the TV episode of *Mad* “George Washington: Cherry Tree Chopper/Star Wars Earn Stripes”. Beyond that, the movie resulted in a mockbuster *Abraham Lincoln vs. Zombie* and fans have also adapted it, putting it into a different context, for example an 8-bit comic version has been created (RocketJump).

All of the examples given illustrate that *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is a popular artifact, i.e., suitable for my outlined definition. The movie’s huge media coverage and its potential for a just as vast audience on the one hand and its potential of becoming a part of people’s lives with the outlined re-uses on the other hand have been demonstrated.

*Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* mashes up various genres. There is a fictional level with parody features with Abraham Lincoln killing vampires in slow-motion martial arts action scenes and, at the same time, the author tries to instill historical accuracy to the plot by sticking to Lincoln’s actual biography. For example, the viewer is introduced to real life friends, his wife Mary Todd, and his antagonist Stephen Douglas. Furthermore, the plot closely adheres to Lincoln’s development from rail splitter to law student to president and inserts several veritable incidents, most of them being political milestones, such as the Lincoln-Douglas-Debates or the Gettysburg Address. However, and I agree here with Riber Christensen who refers to the genre as “historiographic metafiction” (Riber Christensen), the historical aspect in this motion picture is only of minor importance since its (hi)story is based on a fictional diary revealing Lincoln’s dual life. Thus, the main component of *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* is clearly fiction. Hence, I say that Lincoln is used as recognizable icon; one incongruent with the world of vampires. Even though the idea of having the sixteenth president of the United States fighting against the undead seems rather absurd or maverick, this level of the storyline is absolutely not displayed in a ridiculous or laughable way. Neither is Lincoln equipped with evident superpowers nor is he made fun of. On the

contrary, his life as a vampire hunter as displayed in the film fully supports my idea that his character is glorified, as will be shown later on.

Very early in the plot, Lincoln takes a stand against slavery as a child when he intervenes as a slave beats his African American friend William Johnson. As a result, his father gets fired and eventually his mother gets killed by the employer Barts, who is later revealed to be a vampire. Lincoln seeks revenge but has to keep his promise he has made to his father not to do anything foolish. Years later, right after his father dies, he is pursuing his childhood ideal of taking revenge. His first attempt at killing his mother's murderer fails miserably and he only survives with the help of another vampire, Henry Sturgess, who is also seeking revenge for the death of his own family. Since "only the living can kill the dead", "good" vampire Sturgess teaches Lincoln how to fight vampires, about the fact that their weakness is the noble metal silver, and explains that all vampires in the US descend from Adam, a plantation owner from the South, and his sister Vadoma. Sturgess sends Lincoln to Springfield, where he meets several people who become an important part of his life, among them Joshua Speed, a shop owner Lincoln works for; Stephen Douglas, the politician he will later antagonize; Mary Todd whom he will eventually marry; and his childhood friend William Johnson. While studying law and working as a shop assistant by day, Lincoln kills several vampires at night, all of which have lived a normal life during daytime. He eventually dispatches Barts and, in the meantime, Adam and Vadoma are able to link the news of the numerous dead fellows to Lincoln. As a result, Adam kidnaps William to lure Lincoln into a trap at his plantation in the South. After their successful escape, his disapproval of slavery has reached its peak, which leads him to turn his focus on politics in order to take a stand. As president, he has to face an alliance of the confederate states and vampires, since the latter need slaves to appease their thirst of blood. After Lincoln signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and inherent fueling of the Civil War, Vadoma sneaks into the White House and kills the Lincolns' son. As the confederation is growing stronger and stronger and prevailing over the powerless Union soldiers, the commander-in-chief comes up with the idea of using silver ammunition against the confederate vampires. In this regard, Lincoln sets Adam literally on the wrong track by feigning the transportation of silver to the war front at Gettysburg by train. After a brutal fight between Lincoln and his companions against Adam and other vampires on said train, Lincoln is finally able to kill Adam. In the meantime, the silver, which has actually been delivered on a different route, arrives at Gettysburg and, subsequently, the Union is able to turn the tide.

Finally, Mary shoots Vedoma, the murderer of her son, and the war is over. The main plot ends with Lincoln leaving for the theater.

The analysis will show that Lincoln depictions work on two levels. For one, the strong relation to real life events when tracing his private, professional, and political career suggests the assumption on marking glorifying elements, which makes up integral aims of category one, The Eulogized Lincoln. However, the fantasy world plot of a vampire fighting Lincoln depicts him as a gallant warrior against new threats. In combination, the protagonist is stylized to a double savior—freeing mankind from the dark side of vampires and the South from slavery—making him eligible for category two, The Re-Invented Lincoln.

The movie *Lincoln* (2012, Steven Spielberg) was released in the U.S. in November of 2012, after Spielberg had been working on the project for over a decade (“Spielberg on Lincoln”)<sup>72</sup>. It runs 150 minutes and the screenplay is partly based on the Pulitzer-prize winning non-fiction book *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* by Doris Kearns Goodwin<sup>73</sup>.

I consider this motion picture popular mainly because it reaches a wide audience, because of its interactive social media use, and, most certainly, its (to be presented) relevancy for the modern viewer. First, the movie does not leave it to chance to reach and appeal to as many people as possible. *Lincoln* was released a few days after the United States election day of 2012, thereby potentially eyeing for coverage of the political media. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the movie had already celebrated its premiere in October. Another factor for the movie makers’ possibility of approaching a largest possible audience is it being backed by strong-selling production and distribution companies, such as Touchstone and Dreamworks plus Walt Disney and Twentieth Century Fox respectively. *Lincoln* was even enriched with a short clip at the beginning of the movie that summarizes the historical events before the actual start of the plot, which was intentionally planned to make the historical background more understandable and therefore attractive for an international audience<sup>74</sup>. Even though the choice for well-known actors might have primarily happened due to their artistic abilities, it ensured at the same time that some viewers might have been

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<sup>72</sup> This makes it impossible to pin down the movie to a specific date when looking for relation to reality.

<sup>73</sup> I have not mentioned the book in my introduction as it was published in 2005, earlier than my determined time frame.

<sup>74</sup> Steven Spielberg in DVD audio comments

attracted to the film by respectable and Academy Award winning actors such as Daniel-Day Lewis, Tommy Lee Jones, or Sally Field alone. Also, with Joseph Gordon-Levitt as Robert Todd Lincoln, an actor was chosen that can be at least be affiliated with appealing to a young audience, especially after the success of the Batman Trilogy with him being part of it. The performances of Day-Lewis as Abraham Lincoln, Lee Jones as Republican Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, and Field as Mary Todd Lincoln led three of the overall twelve Oscar nominations. Daniel Day-Lewis eventually won the Academy Award for Best Actor (Brooks), which probably gave the movie another boost in popularity a month before the DVD release. The gross earnings of the movie theater showings were approximately \$182 m domestically, even before the release of Blu-ray or DVD versions. Speaking of which, the movie has been released on both a four disc Blu-ray set, a two disc Blu-ray set and DVD. Furthermore, it is available to watch instantly on PlayStation 3, Xbox, Kindle Fire, iPad, PC, and other devices. But not only after the screening in movie theaters, even before there had been several companion books published, thereby targeting different, additional audiences. For instance, historian Harold Holzer, who also served as a consultant for the film, wrote *How Abraham Lincoln Ended Slavery in America* in the run-up to the movie's release, which advertises with the slogan "A Companion Book for Young Readers to the Steven Spielberg Film 'Lincoln'" (2012b).

Besides the huge potential target group, the movie also makes use of the interactive world of (social) media to reach popularity. In addition to running its own Website<sup>75</sup>, the movie operates on Facebook, google+, twitter, and YouTube and interactively links its respective account on their official homepage. But not only do these social media sites exist, they are also made use of by a wide audience, e.g., the Facebook page received over 420,000 likes [Aug 2014]. Furthermore, "Lincoln" was rated by over 150,000 people on the Internet Movie Data Base (imdb.com) and over 240,000 people on Rotten Tomatoes (rottentomatoes.com). Also, the movie is still a vivid subject of discussion on Internet message boards, such as at imdb.com. A good example of utilizing social media is the distributor's idea to debut the trailer as a world premiere in a Google Hangout ("Google Hangout"), which took place on September 13, 2012.

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<sup>75</sup> [www.thelincolnmovie.com](http://www.thelincolnmovie.com)

According to my definition, the movie's many references, features, and spoofs in other media serves as a proof that Lincoln is popular in the sense of my thesis. It was referred to in various TV shows, such as "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno", "Chelsea Lately", "the Colbert Report", or "Saturday Night Live". Furthermore, several spoofs came up, for instance, LinKONG in MAD's first episode of season four (object of investigation of this thesis) and "Linkin: A Lincoln Parody". Also, clips from the film are edited into a fake commercial for "Cialis" in the Tonight Show with Jay Leno (episode 21:71). All the examples mentioned will be subject of discussion of this thesis later on and shall until then serve as an evidence of this film's popularity since it would not have been mentioned and used so often if hardly anyone knew about it. It was adapted, parodied, used in different context by different people—all of which have been explained as features of popularity.

The historical drama Lincoln deals with the last four months of the sixteenth president of the United States of America in office and of his life respectively. In those four months, the focus is on his enforcing of the signing of the thirteenth amendment to the constitution, which would forever abolish slavery in the US anterior to the ending the civil war. A chronological and neutral summary of the plot shall help the unknowing reader before I continue by focusing on a detailed analysis of Lincoln's potential functions.

Whereas the American Version of the movie starts with a scene on a battlefield in the heat of the Civil War, the international version is prefaced with a short explanation of the facts about Lincoln's role and involvement in the Civil War in forms of black and white pictures and title cards, whose text say:

From its earliest days, the American experiment in democracy was threatened by internal division [blending of map of divided country] over the question of human slavery. [picture of group of slaves in front of log cabin] Could a people's government cohere half-slave and half-free? [Two pictures of everyday life] As each attempt at compromise failed, antagonism between the slave South and the free North grew increasingly violent until eleven southern states seceded from the union. And the war came.

The motion pictures starts, or continues respectively for the international version, with a brutal battle scene in heavy rain with many deaths. Lincoln is then introduced as the commander-in-chief as he talks to various soldiers at a distribution camp. Afterwards, there is a cut to two months after reelection. The president is firstly shown as a husband and father—

he talks to his wife Mary Todd about his dreams and takes care of his son Willie at home at the White House. After a short speech—a foretaste of Lincoln’s eloquence—the viewer’s attention is shifted to the main topic of the whole motion picture: Lincoln’s time driven approach on reuniting the Union and abolishing slavery before a peace comes which would allow the returning southern states to block the approach ahead of it becoming law. In the further course of the plot, Abraham Lincoln is depicted in various discussions, strategic scheming, and negotiations with a variety of people: his closest confidants and cabinet members, fellow Republicans and radical delegates, among them Steven, as well as mostly opposing democrats. In order to get twenty missing yes votes, he decides to use his presidential power and offers jobs to the yet to be convinced Democrats. First, he lets a group of three henchmen do the delicate work, but eventually when time is getting short, he takes control himself and finds other ways. In between, Lincoln’s private family life is portrayed. For instance, the conflict with his son, who wants to join the army against Lincoln’s will, is intensifying and a severe argument between the president and his wife reveals that Lincoln was close to sending her to an asylum after the death of their youngest son Willie four years before. The showdown of the plot is marked by the day of vote, with Lincoln even lying about the South’s willingness to surrender, just to ensure the amendment comes to a vote. After a voting by roll call, which had each member of the House of Representatives explicitly shown giving his vote, the amendment is passed by a margin of two votes. Steven comes home with the original bill and the viewer gets to know that he and his colored maid share a bed. With this huge success behind him, Abraham Lincoln knocks down the last attempts by the South during the negotiations to have any influence on taking back the amendment after a possible reintegration and declares slavery abolished for all time. He calls for the South’s surrender, which is sealed after General Lee’s visit at Appomattox. While Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln go on a ride in a carriage, dreaming of a long holiday and more cheerful future times, Lincoln mentions the possibility of a negro vote—just before the plot reaches its sad ending with the death of the President. Instead of showing the murder itself, the viewer witnesses a different theater performance, which Lincoln’s son Willie attends. This play is interrupted by the news of the assassination of the President. The movie ends with the funeral blended over by a flashback to the second inaugural speech made four months before.

Several of Abraham Lincoln’s appearances in films are not included in my analyses. Whereas the previously mentioned film *Lincoln vs Zombies* (2012) did not meet the criterion of being



released for movie theaters, cameos in movies such as *The LEGO Movie* (2014) or *Planet of the Apes* (2001) were not considerable enough to have an influence on either plot or viewers. Yet again, I am careful to point out that this list does not claim to be comprehensive.

### *Television*

Although the subscription numbers of cable networks is on the decline (Beres 2014), more than 98 per cent of U.S. households still possess at least one TV set (Nielsen 2015), which makes television a popular media as it reaches a large audience. Manifold representations of Abraham Lincoln have appeared on the TV screen in the last fifteen years in many different forms. As stated before, I neither propose to offer a complete list nor do I claim to present all plausible potential functions in the course of my discussions, but his very appearances in series and shows, commercials as well as cartoons and animated series on various TV networks are indications of his omnipresence in this category.

### *TV Shows*

I claim that TV shows make up an integral part of media consumerism and that their layout inherently satisfies my criteria of a popular medium. Especially in the US, TV shows are subject to competition. Consequently, their existence is closely connected to their popularity, which is measurable through ratings or placement of advertisement. Most of them are characterized by recurring features binding the viewers and directed at their watching the show regularly. As all presented shows within this chapter were picked up by networks and ran for several seasons, I see their popularity underlined. Although I categorize *Dharma and Greg*, *Whitest Kids You Know*, *Jay Leno*, *Louis CK*, *Drunk History* as shows of different genres, they all combine the feature of comedy. However, all other Lincoln appearances I found in the field of television were either biographies or documentaries and in this way, according to my definition, not an object of popular media as they contain a majority of non-fictional elements. I have not forgotten to include animated series but will refer to those, such as *The Simpsons* or *Family Guy*, later on in chapter 4.

The episode “Dutch Treat” is the tenth chapter of season four of the sitcom *Dharma & Greg*, which originally ran from 1997 to 2002. The overall 81<sup>st</sup> episode premiered on January 9, 2001, on ABC and featured an appearance of Lincoln. The plot has the main characters disagree on how their struggling young friend Donald should tackle his college carrier.

Whereas lawyer Greg wants Donald to concentrate on his law studies, Dharma tries to convince the adolescent to enjoy college life and join a fraternity. These different approaches result in an ongoing subtle dispute between the married couple and eventually escalate into both of them going Dutch, meaning taking separate financial responsibilities and splitting all bills. In the end, they both realize that being independent from each other is not what they want and Donald interpreted the whole set up as a lecture on how much worse life outside college can be. In the very end, Abraham Lincoln shows up in a dream scene and offers waffles out of his stovepipe hat as well as syrup of his pants to the protagonists—in that way giving the episode an ambiguous ending.

The fourth season of “Dharma & Greg” reached an average audience of 12.3 million viewers (EW Staff). The serial was produced by Chuck Lorre who is also responsible for successful series such as “Two and a Half Men”, “Big Bang Theory”, and “Mike and Molly” (Lorre). It won several awards, for instance a Golden Globe award for Best Actress in 1999. Since the show was cross-referred to in a “Two and a Half Men” episode in 2011 (Jacobs), I claim that it is still relevant to television viewers of today. Also, the choice of having the renowned comedian Ryan Stiles play Abraham Lincoln creates chances of fishing for a wider audience.

Even though Lincoln’s appearance does admittedly leave room for various interpretative approaches, my analysis will rate Dharma and Greg’s use of the Great Emancipator as mostly demystifying since, in the end, the offenses outweigh the less frequent general exaggerations to simply elicit a laugh.

*Whitest Kids U Know* (WKUK) is a sketch comedy group that as of 2015 performs on stage in New York City. Their eponymous TV show ran for five seasons on *fuse* and *IFC* networks respectively from 2007 through 2011 and has been in rerun ever since. A typical episode consists of various consecutive, though thematically independent sketches and its style has been described as satirical that “often touches on taboo subjects and edgy topics” (“The Whitest Kids”). WKUK won the 2006 *Aspen Comedy Festival Best Sketch Comedy Troupe Award* (“*About the Whitest Kids*”). The show’s ratings are quite high as it scores 8.5/10 on tv.com, 7.5/10 on metracritics.com, and 8.6/10 on imdb.com. Besides mentioned reruns on IFC, the troupe’s sketches are available at no cost on various media platforms such as ifc.com, YouTube (both officially and privately uploaded), collegehumor.com, or funnyordie.com.

Two sketches feature Lincoln and both deal with the circumstances of the President's assassination at Ford's theater. Furthermore, a Lincoln character has a short appearance in WKUK's movie "The Civil War on Drugs".

The first sketch involving Lincoln in WKUK's TV show took place in the very first episode ever and was called "Abe Lincoln". Loosely based on a *Saturday Night Live* performance of 1983 (Cornfield), WKUK reveal "what has actually happened"<sup>76</sup> at Ford Theater on the night of Lincoln's assassination from their point of view. The sixteenth president is depicted as a rioting, "obnoxious heckler" ("Season 1") who loudly disturbs the performance of Shakespeare's Othello so many times in such an obscene manner that eventually an audience member (arguably John Wilkes Booth) feels so provoked that he goes upstairs and kills Lincoln by hammering him "in the ass". In addition to the show's regular airings and releases on DVD, there are several copies in circulation on YouTube. The two most watched ones combine for a total of 16M viewers, which supports the previously alleged popularity of the show. Also, all three main actors claim this to be one of their favorites and state this in several interviews (Locker)<sup>77</sup>. This makes the sketch, in my opinion, even more interesting for people who have not watched the show or episode respectively yet.

Abraham Lincoln reappears in episode five of season one in another sketch that approaches the subject of his assassination. Whereas its title "John Wilkes Booth" reveals that the assassinator is the protagonist, the skit nevertheless gives enough substance to make inferences about Lincoln. This time, the President is not portrayed as negatively as four episodes before, but he is still being made fun of as a part of a slapstick comedy. In contrast to the preceding sketch, where Lincoln's balcony was mainly pictured from below, the viewer is now at the level of the gallery and witnesses the President and his wife Mary Todd watching a play, only to be regularly disturbed by clumsy assassinator Booth, whose many attempts to harm the President desperately fail. The responsible security guard is likewise portrayed as incompetent and dilettante as he is not able to prevent Booth from sneaking in again and again.

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<sup>76</sup> In an epilog, the actors explain the sketch, stating that historians thought it was too embarrassing to let the nation know about the truth.

<sup>77</sup> Several interviews on the channel's official homepage IFC.com (Locker 2014a,b).

Lincoln's third appearance takes place in the full-length movie *Civil War on Drugs* that was split up in ten episodes and segmentally shown throughout season five of WKUK. It deals with two marijuana activists traveling to Washington, D.C., to talk to President Lincoln, believing the ongoing American Civil war is about the legalization of weed. They eventually reach the capital in episode ten and to their surprise Abraham Lincoln tells them about the real reason for the war and that marijuana has been legal all the time.

Whereas depictions number one and two make cases for a categorization of a Demystified Lincoln by depicting him as an unbearable molester, appearance number three corresponds to my established features of a Re-Invented Lincoln, in this case used to promote the liberalization of soft drugs, and marijuana in particular.

Abraham Lincoln's character appeared in a sketch on NBC's *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* on February 12, 2009. *The Tonight Show* itself has been running since 1954 and has been presented by six different hosts. It is the longest running entertainment program in the United States. Not only do the sheer number of more than 11,000 episodes in total and twenty-two seasons with Jay Leno serve as a proof of its popularity, its having received dozens of awards ("The Tonight Show") speaks for itself and demonstrates that the show is an inherent part of US American television custom. "Celebrity Jeopardy" has been a reoccurring feature of the telecast in which the setting of the game show Jeopardy enables the writers to parody persons of interests in a funny way. A spin-off of said sketch is "Presidential Jeopardy". In episode 93 of Jay Leno's seventeenth season, Lincoln competes with then President Barack Obama and his forerunner George W. Bush in an approximately 9 minute skit.

Bush is illustrated as friendly but more or less dumb, i.e., "illiterate", and, in my estimation, mostly serves as a means of entertainment and inferior subject of comparison. This is why I will neglect the part of the 43<sup>rd</sup> U.S. President and instead focus on Lincoln's sole representation as well as his interplay with Barack Obama. While an analysis of Lincoln's role is self-evident<sup>78</sup>, I justify Obama's inclusion by referring to the 44<sup>th</sup> president's close relation to his presidential idol. As I have already outlined in chapter 1, this strong bond became especially apparent during the festivities of Barack Obama's inauguration that had

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<sup>78</sup> Not only is Lincoln subject of this thesis, but February 12 also marked Lincoln's 200th birthday

taken place two weeks prior to the show's broadcast and, thus, arguably was still tangible for the audience<sup>79</sup>.

The upcoming detailed analysis shows an overall friendly depiction in which Lincoln is portrayed as a much-loved father figure and used in particular to reflect on the other participants, thereby meeting the criteria for having him as a re-invention for contemporary uses.

The sketch "Louis CK/Fun", in which stand-up comedian Louis C.K. (Louis Székely) impersonates Abraham Lincoln, runs roughly four and a half minutes and was part of *Saturday Night Live*'s (SNL) episode six of season 38, aired on NBC on November 3, 2012. It was written by Seth Meyers ("Saturday Night Live").

The whole segment alludes to the set-up of a typical show of *Louie* on FX. It starts with an opening sketch in a tavern in which Lincoln tries to build up a friendship with a freedman. Then there is a cut to a parodied opening shot of *Louie* in which Lincoln is credited with having taken on all the work of the sketch (teleplay, edit, etc.) It continues with a scene where Lincoln argues with Mary Todd about some tickets. In the following, the President performs a stand-up part in the Comedy Cellar and the segment closes with a return to another skit in the same tavern where Lincoln still tries to bond with black people.

Being part of an episode of *Saturday Night Live* (SNL) makes this sketch intrinsically popular as it skims the potential wide audience of the TV show which is currently running in its fortieth season. In addition to this, it represents the anticipated SNL debut of comedian Louis C.K. who arguably brings in his own fan base to the potential viewers. Since the performance was the highest rated show of the 2012-13 season, "drawing a 3.0 in [adults] 18-49 [of age]" (Andreeva), it lets me assume that this might have attracted even more subsequent viewers through the many freely available copies on the Web. For instance, it is accessible on screen.yahoo.com, the licensed partner of *Saturday Night Live*, including the possibility of directly commenting on, twittering about, posting it on Facebook, sharing it on tumblr, or simply forwarding the video's link by mail. There also exists a director's cut

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<sup>79</sup> For instance, Obama took a train ride to Washington in order to commemorate Lincoln. Also, he used Lincoln's original bible to swear his presidential oath, made several references to Lincoln in his inaugural speech and had the celebration taking place at the Lincoln Memorial. In the show, the Obama character explicitly states that "I never would have been elected president, if it hadn't been for you, Mr. Lincoln."

(Koelsch) of this sketch but it will not be subject of investigation since it was not originally available for most people.

The analysis of the excerpt will be in chronological order. Even though imdb.com categorizes it as a spoof of the TV show *Louie*—and not as a parody of the Lincoln character—I nevertheless claim it is still very useful as a subject of investigation since the figure Lincoln is being impersonated, given an artistic form to and a topic of reconfiguration, allowing me to draw potential inferences about the president and his representation. It will reveal that his depiction is mostly of a demystifying nature as elements of both ridicule and criticizing political actions make up its principal element, which, in contrast, seem to be missing from blockbuster movies such as *Lincoln*.

*Drunk History* is a U.S. comedy format that was originally produced as a web series of shorts for funnyordie.com. Its main idea is perfectly described by Jenna Martin of *The New Yorker*:

In each episode . . . , a comedian explains a historical event after knocking back a few too many. The camera cuts back and forth between the narrator's drunken antics and actors who never speak, but instead lip-sync the narrator's dialogue, incorporating every pause, stutter, and hiccup.

The show was adopted by Comedy Central and turned into a TV series in 2013. Its first season on television reached more than one million viewers per week (Zurawik). *Drunk History* has featured renowned actors such as Will Ferrell, Jack Black, Don Cheadle, Ryan Gosling, Eva Mendez, or Courtney Cox. The creator, Derek Waters, stated that he wants to tell stories and leaves it to the audience to interpret the clips (Anderson)—thereby encouraging public discussion, which perfectly contributes to my definition of “popular”. But not only are the show's openness to interpretation and acquisition by an international TV station tokens of popularity, so is its availability and presence on the World Wide Web. It runs a homepage, an official Twitter account (@drunkhistory), a Facebook page, a YouTube channel, and much more. Episodes are also available on cc.com, Hulu.com, and many other sites (Fitz-Gerald). Moreover, chances of being attracted by stumbling across the series in printed media are pretty high as well—with various newspapers and magazines reporting about it (Martin, Anderson). Whereas the producers of the show provide the storytelling actors with information (McAleer) and, thus, aim to be as historically accurate as possible—director Water states they would “make it obvious that [statements are] false” (Aquino)—the

comedic storytelling approach is the primary goal. Having drunk actors—not historians or other scholars—telling stories about famous persons of the past is to my view far away from academia and, thus, suitable for this thesis. Abraham Lincoln has been selected as a theme four times so far but only two of his appearances are suitable for my framework: Lincoln and his relationship to Frederick Douglass, and Lincoln’s past as a lawyer.

In the fifth episode of the web series, Jen Kirkman (drunkenly) elaborates on the President’s friendship with the black abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Producers were able to engage actors Will Farrell to play Lincoln as well as Don Cheadle as Douglass and Zooey Deschanel as Mary Todd Lincoln. The short won the Jury Prize for Short Filmmaking at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival Awards (“Drunk History”). Both the popularity of the actors and recognition by reviewers notionally increase the potential encounters with this artifact as they might bring it to more people’s attention.

Whereas the described first appearance of Lincoln was part of the web series, Lincoln’s second participation in *Drunk History* takes place in the first episode of season one after the show’s reincarnation as a television show on Comedy Central. The idea of the new design is to visit different cities and present three stories that are at some point connected to the corresponding municipalities. I will proceed with a discussion of episode two, “Chicago”, in which Rich Fulcher elaborates on Lincoln’s past as a lawyer and, thus, puts him in the center of the story.<sup>80</sup>

The (drunken) retrospective views on Lincoln’s relationship to Frederick Douglass and on his pre-presidential time as a lawyer respectively, occur to pursue the objective of humanizing the bearded head of state. This assumption leads me to classify this depiction mainly in the category of The Eulogized Lincoln. However, as this show also contains elements of criticism, I will need to question whether a fair argumentation is given or if the quality of arguments fulfills the condition of demystifying Lincoln to some extent. The categorization of his appearance in the episode “Chicago”, however, is uncontroversial. Being depicted as a bullied, unfairly treated young lawyer, his traits as a hard-working person are brought to the fore and flattered.

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<sup>80</sup> However, I will refrain from discussing episode one, “Washington D.C.”, as the story focuses mainly on the Booth Brothers but not enough on Lincoln. The President is only mentioned and briefly seen.

### *Commercials*

With a total spending of \$71.8 billion in 2011 (Gleeson) and a price tag of \$5 million for a 30-second Super Bowl ad (Grodén), commercials make up a strong-selling part of the television industry. Various brands have been using Abraham Lincoln to spur sales figures and it is interesting to see the uses of the popular president in the world of advertising, which at times fundamentally differ in their individual approaches. Besides his obvious selection as a brand representative of the Lincoln Motor Company, Abraham Lincoln figures also functions as an advertising character for sleeping pills, board games, insurances, or soft drinks.

In 2012, *Mattel Inc.* ran a national advertising campaign for their board game “Apples to Apples – the Game of Crazy Combinations”. In this game, up to nine players try to select the “description card” that matches best (or worst) with the “thing card” played by the judge of each round. All three TV spots show obvious mismatches, such as a “sensitive pirate”, a “dangerous poodle”, a “glamorous bigfoot”, and “Sexy Abraham Lincoln”.

In the fifteen-second Lincoln version of the spot, the former president is shown half naked in a trademark red room, which is used for all other varieties as well. He only wears his typical hat, beard, bow-tie as well as rather unrepresentative shorts and gloves (see appendix, fig. 4). In the first half of the commercial, he is shown both dancing and chopping wood topless and with bare legs, accompanied by disco music that goes with the lyrics “it’s gonna be a downpour, downpour, downpour”. When Lincoln lays his finger on his closed lips to ask for silence, a cut takes the viewer to a group of young people playing “Apples by Apples” in a typical living room and shows the judge declaring the combination “sexy Abraham Lincoln” the winner—to the displeasure of the fellow players. The advertisement closes with a cut to the box of the game with the slogan “the game of crazy combinations”. Although offering a wide room for interpretation, I see Lincoln’s reduction to his unsexy outer appearance to be dominant and, thus, classified the commercial as demystifying.

The US-American auto insurance company *Geico* launched a series of commercials playing with rhetorical questions in 2009. In each ad, actor Mike McGlone asks deep-voiced “Could switching to GEICO really save you 15 per cent or more on car insurance?” in an opening scene that recalls a film-noir style. Afterwards, McGlone pauses and adds a (varying) rhetorical question. Subsequently, this rhetorical element is responded to in humorous scenes



that should demonstrate the correctness of the statement about Geico. For example, after asking “Does the buck stop here?”, the scene cuts to a deer stopping next to the actor, or after putting up the question “Do dogs chase cats?”, a dog and a cat are shown being involved in a car chase.

The Lincoln version was released in June 2010. In the aforementioned intro, presenter McGlone asks the viewer “Was Abe Lincoln honest?”. The scene then fades into a grainy, black and white setting with Mary Todd standing in the foreground, testing the president’s honesty by asking “Does this dress make my backside look big?” (see appendix, fig. 5). Lincoln hesitates with his answer but eventually replies “Perhaps a...”, which leads his wife furiously leaving the scene. Lincoln follows her but for only a few steps, being left behind uneasy. As my analysis will reveal, the commercial takes the viewer back to Lincoln’s lifetime, rendering homage to Lincoln’s honest character, thereby providing a perfect fit to Eulogizing Abraham Lincoln.

An emotional TV Spot “Moving Forward” of the *Lincoln Motor Company* that features Abraham Lincoln was part of a costly and comprehensive advertising campaign (Heine) which aimed at reawakening the luxury brand of the Ford Motor Company in 2012/2013, even including a television ad during the 2013 Super Bowl (Lienert). Before becoming part of Ford, Lincoln Motor Co was named for President Lincoln by its co-founder Henry Leland, who was an admirer of the sixteenth president (“Vehicle History”). Nevertheless, this seems to be the first time it was made use of the name giver in promoting the company (Vlasic).

The advertisement starts with Abraham Lincoln walking through mist (see appendix, fig. 6) and continues by “weav[ing] together examples of [the car brand] Lincoln’s past with those highlighting current design innovation” (Priddle). Representatives of the past are not only elegant motives of older Lincoln vehicles but also of their celebrity drivers, such as Dean Martin. The modern touch is created by strong pictures with fast cuts not only of design novelties but also of innovative features of the car as well as of modern manufacturing processes. All of this perfectly fits the beat of the music and accompanies the spot’s message “This is about moving forward by looking back”. As Lincoln is depicted as a classic statesman and is an integral part and center of the relaunching campaign of the Motor Company named after him, the upcoming analysis assigns this depiction to be a eulogizing

one as the president's achievements and appearance of the past are presented to be more than appropriate for future times.

Lincoln is featured in a thirty second spot for *Diet Mountain Dew*, a sugar-free drink manufactured by *PepsiCo*. The commercial was produced by BBDO in 2009 (Parpis). The viewer is taken back to the year 1858 and an unspecified marketplace where one of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates is in full swing. At the moment the commercial sets in, Abraham Lincoln—dressed elegantly in a suite, bowtie, and stovepipe hat—is given the floor and asks the audience if the good people would like a reply. To everyone's astonishment, the president then turns into a tattooed, "testosterone-pumped pro wrestler" (Hogan, p.13) as he rips off his clothes, knocks down all other people with typical wrestling moves on stage, and finally flexes bare-chested with the leftovers of what used to be a chair, receiving cheers from the audience (see appendix, fig. 8). At this point, the picture of posing Lincoln freezes (see picture above) and the lettering "FACT: LINCOLN'S FAVORITE SPORT WAS WRESTLING" is shown. Afterwards, while Lincoln continues posing in the background, an audience member promotes the product by linking the viewer's probable astonishment about the intensity of what they have just witnessed with their likely amazement about the great taste of the diet version of "Mountain Dew" with "none of the calories". The ad closes with a close up of the product and the headline "How Dew Does Diet" written in transparent letters that allows the viewer to look at flexing Lincoln again. This positive depiction of a wrestling Lincoln that depicts him as a man of the people will be discussed in detail within the section of the Eulogized Lincoln.

*Rozerem* is a prescription sleep aid produced by *Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America, Inc.* that was introduced in 2005. One year after its start, a \$100 million advertising campaign—including TV, print, billboard, and an interactive web site—was launched (Hogan 13). All of them have Abraham Lincoln and a beaver as recurring characters who tell a sleepless man that they miss being in his dreams (see appendix, fig. 9). As Bruce Japsen from the *Chicago Tribune* quotes the creators of the campaign: "The ads play to the busy American who misses out on sleep because of work, stress and other issues". I decided to focus my attention on the TV spot since Abraham Lincoln has a speaking role in it and I see the highest potential for discussion on the televised version of the ad in comparison to print and billboard as static sources. And in fact, the television ad has been talked about in lots of different media,

amongst them newspapers and magazines, blogs, and other open websites (Nudd 2006). The persons responsible were “pleased with the Ad Track results” (Petrecca) calling it a successful ad as selling figures went up (Iskowitz).

In the one-minute spot “Your Dreams Miss You”, a tired and sleepless man enters his kitchen, probably in the middle of the night. He joins Abraham Lincoln and a beaver who are sitting at the kitchen table, with a chess board ready. The president—equipped with his typical beard, bow-tie, and stovepipe hat—welcomes the man in a very friendly way (“Hey sleeping beauty”) and explains to him in a very calm voice that they know about the man’s insomnia as they have been waiting to become part of his dreams again. Furthermore, the president comforts the man by assuring him that “it happens to a lot of people”, putting his hand on the man’s arm and telling him that they “just want [him] back”. On a side note, as Lincoln refers to the prepared chess board, the beaver accuses the president of cheating and the defendant counters: “Hello... honest Abe?!”, half questioning, half answering. Lincoln as an object of dreams, a reference to his role as Honest Abe, advising father figure—these features lead to a categorization of a president that is eulogized.

### *Cartoons and Animated Series*

At least thirteen drawn or animated appearances of a Lincoln character have occurred in cartoons and series in the twenty-first century so far and it is likely that some are missing in the following survey. I consider it common understanding that animated series in general are ideally suited for displaying issues and persons in a highly exaggerated way (Thomas and Johnston 1995, 47ff) and that superhuman features are easy to illustrate. These assumptions allow and result in manifold and colorful depictions of the former president—and platforms are available in large quantities, with TV channels broadcasting chiefly cartoons (Cartoon Network, Boomerang) or adult animation (Adultswim). In this regard, it has been explained that some adult start watching cartoons as children and still do so after many years (Mittell 2004, 56ff.), with the Simpsons in its current twenty-seventh season (as of 2015) being arguably the most famous show. These examples indicate the popular and potential influential character of animated series. My analyses refers to Lincoln appearances in *Adventure Time*, *American Dad*, *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*, *Batman – The Brave and the Bold*, *Clone High*, *Family Guy*, *Futurama*, *MAD*, *Robot Chicken*, *South Park*, *Hard Drinkin’ Lincoln*, *The Simpsons*, and *Venture Bros*. Since most of the appearances are brief, a separate plot summary

seems unrewarding and will be combined with the later analyses of the single objects of investigation.

Abraham Lincoln makes two appearances in *Adventure Time*, an animated series with the two protagonists—Pen<sup>81</sup>, a twelve-year old boy, and his best pal Jack, a dog-like creature that can talk and change its shape. Lincoln's debut takes place in the pilot episode, which had originally been considered a stand-alone back in 2007. But after its leak on the Internet, the show enjoyed popularity and was eventually turned into a series, which debuted in 2010 on Cartoon Network (Feeney). In the fifteenth episode of season four, "Sons of Mars" (2012), the President has a return appearance as the king of the "Red Planet".

Besides the above mentioned rise in popularity that led the transformation from an animated short to a series that is, as of 2014, in its sixth season, various reasons justify calling this show popular and incorporating its analysis in this study. Firstly, the viewing figures speak for themselves: two to three million people watch *Adventure Time* each week, including both kids but also adults (Luxton). Furthermore, the *Rolling Stone Magazine* declared it the "trippiest show on TV" (Strauss). Almost considered a standard, *Adventure Time* is also equipped with its own Wiki ([adventuretime.wikia.com](http://adventuretime.wikia.com)), where voluntary contributors can provide information and supply other fans with facts and figures. Additionally, the animation is vividly featured on social media sites such as Facebook (with 17 million likes) and many fan based twitter accounts (up to 15K followers for @AdventureTimeFP). Another indication for Finn/Pen and Jack's popularity are the great number of public discussions about the show, for instance, an ever-increasing number of tweets with the hashtag "#adventuretime" or a lot of pinned pictures and gifs on tumblr (@adventuretime). Also, driven by the right holders, merchandizing products are as well available as video games as well, such as a free version on [cartoonnetwork.com](http://cartoonnetwork.com). All mentioned examples contribute in strengthening the brand. The series is run on *Cartoon Network*, a globally operating TV channel, and is also available on Blu-ray, [cartoonnetwork.com](http://cartoonnetwork.com), Netflix, and many YouTube channels for home entertainment on call. It has won several awards, amongst them the Primetime Emmy in both 2013 and 2014 ("Adventure Time") as well as the Annie Award in 2013 ("39<sup>th</sup> Annual Annie Nominations"). Inserting Lincoln into the show might have happened to serve as an attention getter. If so, this

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<sup>81</sup> In the later developed series he was renamed "Finn".

decision was not unsuccessful. Firstly, having him in the very first episode made the pilot popular enough to have a series arise from it. Secondly, “Sons of Mars” received outstanding reviews (G. Miller, Sava) and arguably gave the show another boost in popularity. Furthermore, the assumption that Lincoln’s depiction is supposed to be positively spun is furthermore backed by the fact that the creator of the series himself, Pendleton Warn, insisted on voicing the Lincoln character himself (“Sons of Mars”). It is no surprise that both episodes incorporate the former president in a very positive way, for a start as an advice-giving counselor and in his second appearance he even functions as an image of God.

“Lincoln Lover” is the fourth episode of season three of *American Dad!* and aired on November 6, 2006 on the nationwide television channel TBS for the first time. It was directed by Brent Woods, makes up the twenty-seventh overall episode of the adult animated sitcom and was viewed by 7.71 m people (“I.T.R.S.”). It is at this time available on various Websites, for instance on Amazon Instant Video for \$1.99. The series *American Dad!* has a huge fan base that runs its own wiki-catalog ([www.americandad.wikia.com](http://www.americandad.wikia.com)) and many other fan pages<sup>82</sup>. It was rated on interactive websites such as [imdb.com](http://imdb.com) or [tv.com](http://tv.com) (8.6 out of 10 points [“Lincoln Lover”]). Its official Facebook page received 19,000,000 likes.

Protagonist and *American Dad* Stan is not selected by the Langley Conservatives to speak at the Republican convention. Very disappointed, his wife invites him to a theater play about Lincoln to cheer him up. The surrealistic play is an absolute disappointment to Stan and encourages him to write his own stage play about Lincoln to restore the reputation and honor of the sixteenth president. Stan’s version is loosely based on the movie *Bodyguard* (1992), has him sharing a bed with a Lincolnesque mannequin (see appendix, fig. 11), and it turns out that more and more male viewers are showing up at its consecutive performances. After another show, Stan is approached by members of the Log Cabin Fraction of the Republican Party (LCR) and asked to speak on their behalf at the Republican convention. He feels very comfortable among them, only to realize that they represent gays—a group he has always opposed himself and always taught his son to oppose. A fabulous vaudeville show finally convinces Stan and he even eventually adopts stereotypical gay behavior. His son gets angry

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<sup>82</sup> For examples: American Dad! at Fanpop.com: [fanpop.com/clubs/family-guy](http://fanpop.com/clubs/family-guy), American Dad Fancub founded August 28, 2011: [americandad-fan-club.deviantart.com/](http://americandad-fan-club.deviantart.com/), Subreddit on American Dad on [reddit.com](http://reddit.com): [reddit.com/r/americandad](http://reddit.com/r/americandad) [all Oct 2014].

about this, trying to “protect” his father by letting the LCR know about Stan’s history of opposing the gay community. Having been dismissed, Stan tries to convince the LCR to take him back and tries very hard to become gay. But after kissing a man, Stan learns that being gay cannot be chosen. At the convention, Stan and his family stand in the last row and his son tries to encourage him to protest against the just arriving LCR. Out of the blue, Stan gets the chance of speaking for the Langley Conservatives and decides to deliver a pro-gay speech and encourages his fellow Republicans to let in the Log Cabin people to pool conservative strengths against the Democrats. As my analysis will reveal, the figure of Abraham Lincoln is used to take action in favor of the LGBT movement and serves as a spokesperson for a modern cause, therefore fitting into the category of the Re-invented Lincoln.

After having had a reoccurring but rather brief appearance in the opening credits of the animated series *Aqua Teen Hunger Force (ATHF)*—without any actual reference to the storylines but rather functioning as a preview to the planned film—a comic version of Abraham Lincoln was given a more weighty part in the 2007 movie *Aqua Teen Hunger Force Colon Movie Film for Theaters (ATHFCMFFT)*.

The series ATHF has been running on Adult Swim as part of the Cartoon Network since 2001 and is currently in its tenth season (as of December 2014). Each episode runs approximately eleven to twelve minutes and deals with the surreal adventures of three anthropomorphic fast-food dishes: Master Shake, a milk shake; Frylock, a floating box of French fries; and Meatwad, a shapeshifting meatball. In 2007, the above-mentioned movie was produced for theatrical release and was released on DVD in the same year. Since it is the only movie so far to have its origins in one of the many Adult Swim series, I claim that this is an indication of its popularity. As further signs of the show’s popularity might serve its widespread potential audience through its availability on its official homepage, iTunes, Amazon, Google Play, and Netflix, as well as its presence in social media, such as Twitter (@therealcarl2), or Tumblr<sup>83</sup>. Moreover, a variety of merchandising is available on various official and unofficial Websites<sup>84</sup>, ensuring the circulation and awareness of the series on different levels together with discussions on fan-based Websites. While A.O. Scott from *The New York Times* states that the movie is “strictly for cultists” (2009), I assume that its

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<sup>83</sup> @aquasomething, @youknowwhatever.com

<sup>84</sup> redbubble.com, etsy.com

mentioned distribution and availability as well as its sketchy promotion (Burr) contributes to people potentially stumbling upon it and thus makes *ATHFCMFFT* potentially popular in my regard.

I argue that President Lincoln's depiction fits to the overall characteristic of the movie as he is illustrated in a pointed and overstated way. This applies to both his visual appearance and assigned behavior and traits. Although containing small elements of a positive depiction, I see the majority of images as negative ones and, thus, categorized Lincoln in Aqua Teen Hunger Force as demystified.

*Batman: The Brave and the Bold* is an animated series based on the caped DC character. It ran from 2008 to 2011 on *Cartoon Network* and was produced by *Warner Bros.* In its three seasons, Batman travels back and forth in time to collaborate with changing super heroes to fight various villains and save the world. The series was released on DVD and Blu-ray and is also available online on different platforms, such as Amazon Instant Video, Netflix, iTunes, or Hulu. Official homepages are provided by Cartoon Network and Warner Brothers, both offering links to video games and other related merchandising. Fans from all over the world can discuss and rate the show on websites on Facebook, TV.com, or imdb.com. Furthermore, being part of the Batman franchise and DC universe enhances the show's potential wide coverage as it was "intended for viewers of all ages who enjoy superhero culture" ("Trivia on Batman"). Abraham Lincoln appears in the very last episode of the whole series "Mitefall!", in which Batman goes back in time and prevents the president's assassination in Ford's Theater. As will be outlined, this depiction in a different universe fits to the category of the Re-Invented Lincoln.

*Clone High* was an adult animated series that originally aired in Canada in 2001 and was later shown in the US on MTV from 2002 to 2003. Its animation technique can be referred to as limited. Clone High is about five high school students who are clones of historical figures which in turn were all murdered or suffered from hard violence: Abraham Lincoln, Ghandi, Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, and John F. Kennedy. Their nemesis is the scientist Scudworth who created them. He tries to monitor the adolescent clones as their school principal who, in turn, the government tries to influence. The series derives its humor from parodying typical high school problems, a "teen dramedy" ("Tonight") and playing with contrasts. For example, some of the "clones' personalities clashed with what we know about their historical

counterparts” (Tilley) and the main characters’ parents do not seem to fit their not consanguine offspring<sup>85</sup>.

Although the show was not granted more than one season, which was not even completely shown on TV in the US<sup>86</sup>, it is nevertheless popular to my understanding and fits in the framework of this thesis for several reasons. First of all, it offers a variety of opportunities for being stumbled upon even without having seen the original airing. I back this argument by pointing out that lots of arguably (now) famous actors either had a speaking role—Lincoln was voiced by Saturday Night Live member Will Forte (“Clone High Backstage”) - or served as guest stars (Zach Braff, Marilyn Manson, Michael J. Fox, Jack Black) making it plausible for their respective fans to happen across Clone High. Second, the series has been crossed referenced ever since in popular culture—leading to the same possibility of being discovered. For instance, actor Zach Braff wears a Clone High T-shirt in his successful TV show *Scrubs*. Second, Clone High has in the meantime become widely available on the Internet and video platforms as well as via DVD. Furthermore, it is still occasionally shown on Canadian Network “Teletoon”. Third, it is being talked about today and, thus, seems more than relevant: It is not only mentioned in positive reviews as a “true original” (Bianculli), there are also several top lists (Belz, Saintmort) that have nothing but love for it. According to the official Facebook page, there are also still public showings and the various hidden “easter eggs” are a popular subject of discussion (“Clone High Easter”). Additionally, cries for a continuation seem to be heard by the creators who have mentioned loose plans about making a Clone High movie. In this context, it might be helpful that both have meanwhile made very successful films, for instance *The Lego Movie* or *22 Jump Street*, and do not get tired of talking about their show *Clone High* (Han, Chitwood). Lincoln’s representation in the world of high school is designed to tackle real-life teenage problems and, such being the case, is suited for a categorization into the “Re-invented Lincoln”.

The animated sitcom *Family Guy* was created by Seth MacFarlane who also voices several characters (Sperling). The series is about the Griffin family—Peter, Lois, their three kids, and the speaking dog Brian—who all live in Quahog, Rhode Island. The show is currently in its

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<sup>85</sup> For example, womanizing JFK has overly gay parents, Ghandi’s foster parents are a stereotype Jewish couple.

<sup>86</sup> The show was canceled after eight episodes in the U.S. after protests against Ghandi’s depiction occurred in India (“Trivia Clone High”).



13<sup>th</sup> season on the international broadcast network FOX and received several awards, among them an Emmy for “Outstanding Voice-Over Performance” (“family guy emmys”). Its official Facebook page has been liked by 56 million people as of October 2014. The communication takes place via social networks such as google plus, twitter, and an official YouTube channel (360,000 subscribers). Full episodes are available to the public on fox.com, fox on demand, Hulu, and many other Websites or services respectively. With the *Family Guy Video Game!*, *Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse*, and *Family Guy: The Quest for Stuff*, three video games for various consoles have been released. Also, several fan pages<sup>87</sup> and an own wiki-version (familyguy.wika.com) can be found. The level of awareness of the series has potentially increased due to several crossovers to other popular animated TV programs, such as American Dad!, Southpark and the Simpsons (Foss).

An animated Abraham Lincoln has had two appearances on the show so far. In the fifth episode of season seven, “The Man with Two Brians”, the president has a short cameo as a typical American neighbor, which shows rudiments of demystification. Furthermore, the second Lincoln participation in the Family Guy cosmos is as a part of a fictional commercial for the product “Mentos” in the episode “Mind over Murder” (Season 1, episode 4). The classification of the latter seems on thin ice, this is why I will offer two suggestions before finally categorizing it—one speaking for a Re-Invented Lincoln criticizing the commercial industry and the other representing a Demystified Lincoln.

*Futurama* is an animated series that ran on FOX and Comedy Central respectively from 1999 to 2013 in seven seasons. Comedy Central’s homepage describes it as

hatched from Matt Groening’s<sup>88</sup> brain, Futurama follows pizza guy Philip J. Fry, who reawakes in 31st century New New York after a cryonics lab accident. Now part of the Planet Express delivery crew, Fry travels to the farthest reaches of the universe with his robot buddy Bender and cyclopsian love interest Leela, discovering freaky mutants, intergalactic conspiracies and other strange stuff. (“Futurama Comedy Central”)

It is available on DVD as well as online (hulu.com and amazon instant video) and is rerun on its home station Comedy Central. The science-fiction adventures were awarded twelve Emmy

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<sup>87</sup> Fan pages: familyguyfans.com, johnferndesign.com/familyGuySite, reddit.com/r/familyguy.

<sup>88</sup> Inventor of *The Simpsons*.

Awards (“Futurama Emmys”) and various merchandising products are available world-wide. It was rated an 8.7 out of 10 at [imdb.com](http://imdb.com) and its Facebook page received over 30 Million likes. Other animated series refer to *Futurama*, for instance *the Simpsons*, *Family Guy* or *the Cleveland Show* (“Futurama Connections”). Also, besides mentioned social media, there are a lot of other possibilities for fans to interact. To take a single example, the message board [peelified.com](http://peelified.com) has almost 13,000 registered members and shows roughly 1.5 Million posts<sup>89</sup>. Furthermore, the internet meme “Why not Zoidberg” has its origins in the same-named character (Sav). Hence, I argue that the franchise’s huge fandom and interrelated characters make *Futurama* a popular kind according to my standards.

Abraham Lincoln has several appearances in the animated series, sometimes given a speaking role, sometimes not. The bearded president appears in at least four different versions. The figure of “Robot Lincoln” is shrouded in mystery and mainly serves the function of eulogizing its human original. Lincoln as “Head in a Jar” shows up on four different occasions, sometimes mainly Re-Invented when used to criticize others (advertising industry or consumerism), sometimes bluntly demystified. The character of “Evil Lincoln” makes no secret of its brutality and savageness and suggests a classification as Demystifying role. The fourth figure, “Abraham Lincolnbot”, represents a similar role as this version symbolizes fatigue, mental disorders, and alike.

The cartoon satire “LinKONG” was a segment of the opening episode of *MAD*’s animated TV-series in its fourth season. It premiered on April 1, 2013, on Cartoon Network as number 79 in series with the tagline “It’s a classic tale of America’s greatest giant ape president.” The section runs approximately three minutes and forty seconds as part of a twelve minute episode and refers to the motion picture “Lincoln” in a totally exaggerated, MAD-like manner. In doing so, President Lincoln is depicted as a giant gorilla.

Various arguments defend my choice of using “Linkong” as a popular artifact in terms of this thesis, among them its wide reach and reference to and interplay with to other popular artifacts. Primarily, “Linkong” was part of the successful TV series “MAD”, which itself is a fragment of the famous MAD-universe—including the satire magazine currently edited by John Ficarra, board and computer games, and other animated series such as MADtv. This broad range of interconnections may result in a diversified base of potential Linkong viewers.

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<sup>89</sup> As of November 2014

Over 1.5 m people watched the premiere airing on Cartoon Network in the US (The Futon Critic Staff), which still leaves out the number of viewers in the other countries where the show was broadcast—among them Canada, Australia, Russia, and many Latin American countries (own research). The video is still reaching a huge potential audience as it is available on many different, easy accessible media, e.g. YouTube, WarnerBrothers Video, Amazon Instant Video, and Walmart Video on Demand. Furthermore, Linkong alludes and refers to many different popular relics and thereby offers a possibility of coming across this popular media dealing with Abraham Lincoln without any initial interest, in that way broadening the potential audience once more. It is not only a direct spoof of the movie “Lincoln” but combines it with references to “King Kong” and “Mothra” or Godzilla movies respectively. Also, there are cross-references to former episodes of MAD to be found and having famous comedian Gilbert Gottfried voicing character Linkong plays a part in contributing in the potential popularity of this part of this parody.

I claim that the predominant aspect of this show is to work on two levels. By taking an exaggerated Lincoln version to criticize a eulogized Lincoln depiction, i.e., that of the movie *Lincoln*, the worshipping of the main protagonist is potentially put in the pillory. Moreover, as Lincoln is depicted fighting new enemies and being ultrastrong, new context show re-invention. Both categories fit to grouping number two.

*Robot Chicken* is a stop-and-motion animated TV series that premiered on Adult Swim (as part of Cartoon Network) in 2005. Ever since, seven seasons and nine specials have been produced. A typical episode runs between eleven to twelve minutes and is divided into several, mostly independent sketch-comedy segments mocking and parodying popular culture.

The show is available to a wide potential audience. Not only does it run on the cable television network Adult Swim in the US, but Robot Chicken’s official homepage also offers fans selected episodes for free. In addition, the whole series is available on Netflix, Amazon, iTunes, and DVD. Furthermore, it has won several awards, amongst them two Primetime Emmy Awards and an Annie Award. On Facebook, it has received 2.3 million likes and approximately 63,000 people follow the official Twitter account “@cyborgturkey”, both numbers as of November 2014. Like most other cartoon series, the fan community of Robot Chicken runs its own Wiki that includes links to other interactive fanpages (“Links”). The many references to other artifacts of popular culture are supported by the inclusion of

celebrities voicing the animated figures. For instance, besides many members of the Family Guy voice-staff, prominent figures such as Kevin Bacon, Melanie Griffith, Scarlett Johansson, or Stan Lee contributed to the show (“Robot Chicken”).

Abraham Lincoln is part of two different episodes of Robot Chicken. His first animated appearance takes place in the special episode “Robot Chicken: Star Wars” from 2007, the second one occurs in episode 57 “Bionic Cow” from 2008. Whereas the former is mainly used to reflect badly on then-President George W. Bush, the latter contains mockery and an upcoming analysis is dedicated to work out whether more positive interpretations seem applicable.

*South Park* is an animated series that was created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone and has been running on Comedy Central since 1997. It deals with the “the misadventures of four irreverent grade-schoolers [Stan, Kyle, Kenny, Eric] in the quiet, dysfunctional town of South Park, Colorado” (“South Park”). The animation’s humorous style has been described as slaughtering “pop culture’s most sacred cows” (Sands), taking “shock humor to ridiculous extremes” (Weinstock 175), and being highly topical since each show is produced within a week before broadcast (Amid). It is also available on various other media sources, mostly free of charge, such as its official YouTube channel, Hulu.com, or southpark.cc.com.

The show’s popularity is characterized by various indicators. Its official Facebook page has received 51M likes as of December 2014. Also, its Twitter account has over 1.5M followers. In terms of honors, the show has so far been awarded four Primetime Emmy Awards and a Peabody Award. The movie *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* arose from the series in 1999. In the context of TV Guide Magazine’s 60th anniversary in 2013, South Park was voted the tenth greatest cartoon of all time (Sands).

Abraham Lincoln has a cameo appearance in South Park’s episode “The List”, which makes up the fourteenth and final chapter of season eleven and aired on November 17, 2007. Despite its briefness, the figure’s impact on the episode is significant. Lincoln is depicted as a counselor on how to cope with bullying and become confident. Since the old president is commenting on a special problem that is still predominant in today’s society, his role perfectly fits the category of the Re-Invented Lincoln.

*Hard Drinkin' Lincoln* is a cartoon series that was released on the Internet by Icebox, Inc., in the year 2000. It was written by Mike Reiss, who also earned credits for his work on *The Simpsons* and *Ice Age* ("Mike Reiss"). Its 13 episodes, which only run roughly two to three minutes each, portray "America's favorite boozehound! . . . the real Honest Abe: a loud, lewd, obnoxious guy in a big hat—the kind of guy you sit behind in the theater and just want to shoot" ("Hard Drinkin' Lincoln").

Although the show did not make it on TV or any other media besides the Internet and thus could be considered not too popular for the purposes of this study, I would like to present two examples to demonstrate the opposite. First, I refer Schwartz' statement that "many high school students may look at [Internet videos about Lincoln] for ideas for their own Lincoln video projects" (Schwartz 2008, 164) and therefore might come across this show. Second, the videos are frequently cross-linked in the World Wide Web and freely available without fees or subscriptions on numerous video platforms, such as YouTube or Icebox.com. At the same time, even thirteen years after its creation, the show is still active on the Social Media market and runs, for instance, a twitter account (@HrdDrknLincoln), a Pinterest page, and an official Facebook page. The fact that the creator successfully wrote for other popular series might also help happen across viewers to the videos. My analysis outlines mostly demystifying elements, as Lincoln's harsh misbehavior makes people around him so furious that they show open bloodlust towards the president in all episodes.

*The Simpsons* is a U.S.-American animated sitcom. It was created by Matt Groening and has been running on the Fox Network since 1989. The series is about the eponymous American family that lives in the fictional town of Springfield, a place name everyone in the United States can allude to (Roca). The main characters are father Homer, a nuclear-plant employee; the loving mother Marge; and their three kids Lisa, who is very talented; troubleshooter Bart; and baby Maggie<sup>90</sup>.

I take little risk in claiming that *The Simpsons* is one of the most popular and successful animated TV shows in U.S. history. Being the longest running sitcom (Friedlander), the creative artists have produced over 500 episodes that have been watched by millions of people. But not only do the ratings underline the show's popularity, but so do the number of Facebook likes (75 million), Twitter followers (475.000), or subscribers on its subreddit on

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<sup>90</sup> For a complete episode overview refer to Groening 2010.

reddit.com (95.000). Furthermore, there are various wikis and fan pages available<sup>91</sup>. Besides regular Simpsons episodes there have been specials for Halloween and Christmas and also a very successful movie with a worldwide gross of \$527 million (“The Simpsons Movie”), which was released in 2007 and shown in movie theaters all around the globe. Apart from the original airings and reruns on Fox, *The Simpsons* is as well available on Foxnow.com, Hulu.com, DVD, Blu-ray, and other media. There is even a Simpsons ride at Universal Studios in California. Furthermore, the yellow Springfield family is represented in video games<sup>92</sup> and by numerous merchandizing articles. The show has been honored with many trophies—amongst them over twenty Primetime Emmies and Annie Awards—and additionally with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The show’s influence on and intermix with everyday life becomes particularly evident in the fact that Homer Simpson’s trademark sigh of frustration “d’oh” has gotten an entry in the Oxford dictionary (Libaw). Daniel Hannan explains the success of the show because it includes all aspects of human life, “pathos”, “bawdy humor”, and “rudeness”. One of the main features of the cartoon is to parody recent events and popular culture in general. Especially cameos of celebrities and other guest stars regularly attract attention and being part of the show means, in my view, contemporaneity, relevance, and/or trendiness.

One figure that occurs in the Simpsons cosmos in a variety of ways is Abraham Lincoln. I will neglect rather small or too indirect references and innuendos—such as the simple mentioning of his name or representations as a mural, statue on the mini golf place, or as a name giver to a convention center—and will rather concentrate on his speaking roles from season 13 onwards (turn of the century) as he appears in these instances “in person” and has a certain impact on the storyline. As there are over 500 Simpsons episodes available, I make no pretense to a complete covering of all possibly relevant cameos. As will be outlined, Lincoln’s representations serve different functions and cover all facets—from being worshipped to serving as a model for modern times and responding to recent issues to offering demystifying aspects and giving cause for criticism on his person.

*Venture Bros.* is an animated TV series that has run five seasons on Cartoon Network since 2003. It “is an extended irreverent parody of Jonny Quest” (Booker 173) and other popular

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<sup>91</sup> Simpsons.wikia.com; simpsonswiki.com; simpsoncrazy.com

<sup>92</sup> Lincoln can be chosen as a premium character in the game “Tapped Out” by Electronic Arts.

culture, chronicling the adventures of scientist Dr. Thaddeus Venture and his family accompanied by their bodyguard. The series is available on DVD and Blu-ray as well as via streaming on adultswim.com, amazon instant video, ign.com, and others. Furthermore, it is paid tribute to by several fan pages, such as [venturefans.org](http://venturefans.org); a wikia ([venturebrothers.wikia.com](http://venturebrothers.wikia.com)); and multiple blogs, e.g. on Facebook. Additionally, viewers can discuss the show on, e.g., its Facebook page—which has received 283,000 likes as of December 2014—or the *venturebros* subreddit at [reddit.com](http://reddit.com) with approximately 12,000 subscribers. According to one of the creators of the show, Doc Hammer, the main motive is “failure” as “[i]t's about that failure happens to all of us. . . Every character is not only flawed, but sucks at what they do, and is beautiful at it” (Silverman).

The former president was assigned a role in episode nine of season two “Guess Who’s Coming to State Dinner?“, which aired on September 10, 2006. This appearance is difficult to classify as it exemplifies Lincoln’s multifaceted nature. It contains various potential elements that would allow different categorizations but since the most prominent one is the former President’s assistance to the protagonists, I mainly see a Re-Invented Lincoln solving new problems and fighting new enemies but I will not neglect minor aspects of both ridicule and worshipping.

Abraham Lincoln’s appearances in the cosmos of animated series are multifarious, colorful and cover various types of media as well as all given categorizations. The previous overview has shown that his various figures appear in formats from short Web series to well-established and long running shows and the upcoming detailed analyses will demonstrate that his roles range from worship through to referring to recent issues through to (seldom) instances of ridicule and deconstruction.

### *The Internet*

In our complex high-tech world, the Internet has become an essential tool of communication and amusement with countless links, turns, and windings. Users can get lost for hours by randomly surfing the Net and coming across topics and objects rather by chance. Nowadays, Internet access is available at home and work, in a car, on the go via smartphone or tablet. This medium combines it all since copies of movies and TV contributions are available virtually at any given time. Furthermore, the Internet is partly replacing the printed media as

most magazines and newspapers are available online. According to the census, 74 per cent of U.S. households have Internet access (File 2), people who use handheld devices to get connected are listed with 89.8% (Horrigan 4); Castells even speaks of 7 billion people being connected through wireless devices worldwide (9). Since there are many public possibilities to access the World Wide Web (libraries, hot spots, etc.), it does not seem overstated to claim that Internet access is available for everyone in the United States.

Probably no other media is more interactive and faster moving than the Internet. It adapts to current events in almost real time with billions of users and contributors all over the globe (Castells). Even though traces of who originally created or later recreated certain objects are sometimes hard to follow, it is worth to having a detailed look at memes, songs, and comics containing depictions of Abraham Lincoln found in this category since, in terms of popularity, no other media guarantees a wider potential audience and permeability from user to consumer with a high chance of a consumer becoming a re-user or adapter of the original to other needs.

### *Memes*

“Internet Memes” make up an important part of media representations of Abraham Lincoln. A definition of said Internet Memes on the basis of Dawkins’ model of “memes” as well as an explanation of their importance and relevance to this thesis will serve as a basis for the subsequent introduction of various examples dealing with the sixteenth President of the United States.

The original term “meme” was coined by biologist Richard Dawkins (1976) who considered it a “unit of cultural transmission” (Àlvarez), leaning it on the natural gene as an evolving replicator of biological data. Referring to the phenomenon of Internet memes, the conceptual idea of a meme has to be altered since the Internet version can be changed and adjusted deliberately. Thus, “meme” nowadays “has become the coin of the realm within internet cultures” (Nooney and Portwood-Stacer 249) and is often associated with the digital remixing of ideas that are “appropriated, re-coded, and slotted back into the internet infrastructures” (249). Dawkins himself now refers to Internet memes as “anything that goes viral” (Solon).

I consider the concept of *Internet Memes* very suited for my thesis, in particular because it combines both popular and collective conceptions. I am aware of the fact that some Internet



Memes are rather fast-paced and characterized by a short life span. Also, it is likely that some of them only reach a limited target group. However, I deem them relevant and as interesting signs of the times as they all possess a certain function (which has to be analyzed) and a huge potential of reaching a wide audience. Even if some memes might have sunk into obscurity by the time this thesis is published, they still had a certain level of relevance at a certain point in time. The importance and *raison d'être* of Internet Memes within the scope of this thesis is even more reinforced because they perfectly link the two bases of my theoretical construct of popular media memory, i.e., being part of popular culture and a collective memory. As Zittrain puts it, memes are becoming “more and more assimilated into popular culture” (388) and he attributes a culture producing role to internet platforms in general. Hence, the vividness of social (media) platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, or 4chan with the respective forms of interaction, such as liking, upvoting, retweeting, or simply forwarding, show the easiness of circulating ideas and cultural bits and pieces. Furthermore, Internet Memes are also said to bear the potential of creating a collective identity (Gal) with their symbolic power as simple message bearers (Mina). Hence, Internet Memes serve as a media of collective memory—exactly mirroring my basic idea of a popular media memory.

Whereas Internet Memes might take any digital form—including videos, gifs, or audio files—I decided to focus on pictures and texts only. This happens, firstly, in order to limit the possible objects of studies and, second, because I claim both media types to be much easier to either reproduce or alter (for instance [knowyourmeme.com](http://knowyourmeme.com)) and therefore invite more people to forward and work on them. Second, their lower data amount makes it arguably easier to transfer and, thus, potentially reach a wider audience. Due to the anonymous character of the Internet (Palme and Berglund), I am not able to name the original poster or author most of the time and original content might not be available anymore. To my view, this does not create a problem since it is precisely the variability and striving for topicality that makes up a basic element of memes and popular media. I have restricted my selection of memes to the year 2014 as the availability of older objects is very limited. Besides using a simple google search, as I expect to find websites that I have not been aware of before and will be glad to include new findings into my analysis, I have also included reddit.com into my search cluster. As “a type of online community where users vote on content” (own website), it is, to my view, optimally qualified as a source pool since it intrinsically works with the concept of open provision of content and its voting, thus alluding to popularity. With over 200 Million

individual visitors clicking on 7 billion reddit-pages per month (“About Reddit”), my claim of popularity is bolstered by the sheer numbers of participants as well.

Amongst the top search results, I have encountered a vast number of memes and pictures containing allusions to Abraham Lincoln. The majority of representations revolved around the same three topics: Lincoln and invented quotes, *übermensch* representations, and subcultural “hipsteresque” instances—all of which exemplarily illustrating the president’s high relevance and topicality. Remarkably enough, none of the representations fell in the category of a demystified president as all of them are either depictions of glorifications or make new positive reuses of the former statesman, i.e., re-inventing him.

### *Music Videos*

As mentioned previously, former music television channels such as MTV or VH-1 do hardly show music videos anymore (Mitchell), and if, they have become part of a pay-tv network. Hence, I decided to class music videos into the category “Internet” as most music videos are available on YouTube or social media sites for free and consumed via this medium. This free disposability comes along with the benefit of offering new opportunities, such as animating viewers to utilize the original version in many different ways, e.g., uploading karaoke versions, own interpretations, dubbing, mixing, or re-recording. Furthermore, it enables low-budget bands to publish music videos with the potential of becoming viral. Abraham Lincoln is also part of this world, at least two bands making use of him in considerable ways.

“The Ultimate Showdown of Ultimate Destiny” is a comical pop song, whose animated video was released in 2005. The tune was written and performed by singer and artist Neil Cicierega under the pseudonym “Lemon Demon”, while official artwork and the flash video were done by Shawn Vulliez. The creators describe the style of the cartoon as “animutation”, which is characterized by bad animation but being hilarious in terms of humor (Rempel H3).

Both song and video tell the story of a clash of pop culture titans; “a musical tale of the greatest battle to ever occur ever” (“The Ultimate Showdown”). Starting with a fight between Batman and Godzilla set in Tokyo, it quickly escalates into a rumble between various popular figures of both history and fiction, among them Indiana Jones, Chuck Norris, Jackie Chan, Hulk Hogan, the Power Rangers, Optimus Prime, Shaquille O’Neal, or Abraham Lincoln. In

the end, Fred Rogers emerges the winner as the only survivor—only to commit seppuku and thereby referring to the style of Japanese anime comics.

12 million views on its official channel on newsground.com as well as another 15 million views on YouTube both underline the video's popularity. Its arguable cult status can be derived from the several parodies, remixes, and battle mixes the song has entailed (Alencastro). The same holds true for a remake of the video (using the same song though) that can be found on various video platforms on the Internet, amongst them versions in other animation formats and even an animated Lego (Sirpotatos) and My Little Pony special (BronyMike). Furthermore, a new version of the song was released in 2010, which also underlines the relevance and sustainability of the whole project. All these examples of recycling and reuptaking of the original version, along the above-mentioned popularity in terms of viewing figures and potential audience, make it a perfect match of a popular artifact according to my definition.

Besides the more obvious consideration of Lincoln as a hero in the context of fighting other heroes, I have identified his figure here as a potential tool to criticize both society's need to see heroes falling again and again and constructing ranking procedures for popularity in the first place.

The second music video featuring Abraham Lincoln is "Gay Bar" by *Electric Six*. The song was released as the second single of the band's debut album "fire" in 2003. It not only received viral attention on the Internet (30 million views on YouTube) but also hit the UK top five single charts (Weiss). The tune's popularity in the sense of my definition is also underlined by the several parodies and mimicry it has entailed (Lewykrew, "Ever seen"). According to front man Dick Valentine, some fans would still come "to the show dressed up like that Gaybraham Lincoln" (Broderick).

As the title suggests, the tune deals with a night at a gay bar and plays on gay stereotypes. Whereas the song text mainly focuses on a repetition of the same lines all over again ("I wanna take you to a gay bar", "I've got something to put in you", and "You're a superstar at the gay bar") and does not mention Abraham Lincoln at all, it is the video that makes this piece of artifact worth investigating to my understanding—most certainly since it brings the

core of this thesis into play but also because the visual adaption bears a lot more potential of being interpreted in various ways by its potential wide audience.

*Epic Rap Battles of History (ERBoH)* is a video series created and written by Peter Shukoff and Lloyd Ahlquist. It features Abraham Lincoln twice, first battling Chuck Norris and, second, intruding on a fight between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. The series is shown on their own YouTube channels with over 11 million subscribers and 1.4 billion total views of its 51 episodes (“ERB”). Its main idea is to have historical, pop-cultural, and fictional characters rap battle against each other. *ERBoH* started as a low budget video show—producer Shukoff speaks of \$50 for three videos (ERB2)—in 2010 and developed to a popular series that as of 2014 has hosted guest stars such as Snoop Dogg or “Weird Al” Yankovic. Furthermore, its two YouTube channels and the official website let the viewer cast their vote for their respective favorites and link to a downloadable version of iTunes. Another example of inclusion of the fanbase is the creators’ request for and later acceptance of viewers’ suggestions (Kaufman). Striking examples of battles are episodes “Steve Jobs vs. Bill Gates” (winning a Streamy Award in 2013) or “Albert Einstein vs Stephen Hawking” (one out of six episodes that were awarded gold status by RIAA's Gold & Platinum Program). Abraham Lincoln has had two appearances in *Epic Rap Battles of History* so far. His first takes place in episode three of season one when battling Chuck Norris and his second occurs in episode eight of season two when Lincoln returns to confront the show’s regular main contestants Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. In both appearances, the Lincoln character interferes with present developments, i.e., the emerged hype around Chuck Norris and the U.S. election campaigning of 2012, and thus will be dealt with in chapter 2 on a Re-Invented Lincoln.

### *Comic*

After the “golden age” (Lupoff in Schelly 74) of comic books in the 1930s through 50s, comic adaptations are now more and more in demand with prominent examples from Marvel and DC Comics now even fighting for the common good on the big screen of movie theaters. Abraham Lincoln has his own comic book series *Time Lincoln*. The sci-fi, time-travel, steampunk adventures feature the sixteenth president “freed from the bonds of time” (“Time”) fighting his arch enemy “Void Stalin”—a time traveler himself who causes mayhem in the past, present, and future. It is published by Artic Press and is written and illustrated by its creator Fred Perry. I assume that this move of the publishing house increases the potential

number of readers as Perry is a well-established author in this genre and might arouse interest in the series (Joslyn). The first issue was published in February 2010 and has been followed by the adventures “Fists of Führer”, “Jack to the Future”, “Cuba Commander”, and “Apocalypse Mao” ever since. Whereas the different titles display with whom Void Stalin joins forces, Lincoln bands together with various historical figures such as Ben Franklin, George Washington Carver, Isaac Newton, Amelia Earhart, or Albert Einstein in order to fight the villains and “to right the wrongs of the past and future.” (Langshaw).

Since the analysis of all editions would have exceeded the scope of this thesis, I decided to particularly focus on Lincoln’s representation in one single issue of the series. I argue that—enriched with some general information—this will be sufficient to elaborate on the President’s most important displayed traits and potential functions of the hero of the adventures. The selection of *Time Lincoln versus Cuba Commander* happened randomly and was due to its availability as it was the first issue to be shipped to my office<sup>93</sup>. Since I have read most of the comics, I consider this choice an appropriate random sample to reflect on his depiction as a hero that fights new enemies. Since most villains are close to real life dictators emerging after Lincoln’s death, I claim that the U.S. president is used to fight all possible threats of past, present, and future.

#### *Analysis according to Potential Functions*

After having presented the single objects of investigation, I will now proceed to conclude the investigation of said artifacts in terms of their potential functions within the frame of popular media memory. Once allocated to one of the three categories, the particular analyses will be arranged chronologically, which should allow me to explore if a generally valid development is observable and come up with a conclusion presenting the status quo of 2015. As previously introduced, I will now commence to offer interpretations of different representations of the sixteenth president in the three most fruitful popular media of the period of investigation, namely cinema in the form of *movies*; television including *series*, *shows*, *commercials*,

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<sup>93</sup> Free versions of the comic were not accessible from Germany. I then preferred loaning a hard copy via inter library loan for free copy instead of purchasing a Kindle version or an online text.

*cartoons* and *animated series* as well as the Internet with *comics*, *memes* and *music videos*<sup>94</sup> as objects of investigation.

#### 4.1 The Eulogized Lincoln

Several representations of Abraham Lincoln in twenty-first century popular media contain strong elements of glorification. This includes general portrayals as martyr and noble statesman as well as praise for his assigned particular political achievements such as saving the union or emancipating the slaves. Furthermore, the former president is attributed with positive character traits as for instance an image as a man of the people, hard-working and honest. Though individually expressing the adoration in different forms, examples of worshipping Lincoln are observable in films, TV shows, commercials, animated series, and Internet memes.

##### The Martyr

##### Animated Series, *Adventure Time*, “Son of Mars”

After Lincoln’s first brief appearance in the animated series *Adventure Time* took place in its pilot episode, his second one offers the audience more information on his role within the *Adventure Time* universe, particularly why his first appearance took place on the red planet. It is revealed that the former president of the United States is now the immortal King of Mars (see appendix, fig. 14). The story of episode “Son of Mars” takes the viewer on a journey. The Martian figure “Grob Gob Glob Grod” is on his way to earth with the order to arraign his evil brother Magic Man back on Mars. Using a magic trick, Magic Man switches bodies with Jack the Dog and, hence, instead of Magic Man, Jack is taken and eventually convicted by the King of Mars alias Abraham Lincoln. Though Finn is able to travel to Mars, he does not make it in time and Jack dies. Now Lincoln/King of Mars notices his huge mistake and, as a consequence, seeks negotiation with Death himself. Lincoln/King of Mars is able to trade his

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<sup>94</sup> As stated elsewhere, since music channels on television do hardly show music videos anymore (Mitchell 2010), I decided to class music videos into the category “Internet” as most music videos are available on YouTube or social media sites and consumed via this medium.

immortality for Jack's life. A shot<sup>95</sup> can be heard from the off and while Lincoln, previously sitting alive on his throne, has now transformed into a marble memorial, which resembles the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Jack has come to life again, which makes the figure of Lincoln a martyr sacrificing himself for the greater cause.

In terms of his outer appearance, there have been some changes to his looks in comparison to the pilot episode (see chapter 4.2). His suit is a lot darker, giving him a more official, statesmanlike impression. Though Lincoln is still without hat and now lacking his halo, he is this time shown sitting on a throne, which does not make him look less superior. Furthermore, the King of Mars is most of the time shown from a low angle and this feature underlines these assumptions. Interestingly, the former president is only referred to as "King of Mars", not as "Lincoln" anymore. According to creator Ward, who "was very conscientious of how Lincoln was portrayed in the episode", he wanted Lincoln's appearance to have real meaning. Besides representing a superior role, at least two working functions can be inferred from the Martian King's depiction. The creator's decision to attribute Lincoln the role of the ruler of the red planet "Mars", allows me to link his portrayal to his former earthly role as commander-in-chief (as God of War in Roman mythology, "Mars") and serving as role model for all men (as symbol for male gender, Stearn). Additionally, all these features are raised to even higher standards as the King's actual behavior is portrayed as incredible noble, honorable, and unselfish all the way. Not only is he referred to as "The wisest, most honest super being of all time" by Finn, but Lincoln is also able to maintain or even advance his godlike status by sacrificing his own life/immortality for someone else—a comparison to Jesus seems at least conceivable (Sugar). The fact that the King made a mistake and makes good for it, potentially shows the viewers that everyone slips but that it is important to admit it and make up for it. If transferred from the figurative level to Lincoln's actual life, Lincoln gave his life to protect and save others and, according to my interpretation, the creator uses this allegory to honor the sixteenth president and provide him a comic-like monument with god-like features.

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<sup>95</sup> This might serve as a reference to Lincoln's assassination by John W. Booth.

The Statesman

TV Advertisement, *Lincoln Motor Company*, “Moving Forward”,

President Lincoln has two appearances in the one-minute commercial of the Lincoln Motor Company. As previously mentioned, the spot starts with him walking through a misty setting (see appendix, fig. 6). Wearing his trademark stovepipe hat, beard, bow-tie, and spruce dark coat, he has his arms crossed behind his back and takes a slow but, in my view, determined step towards the viewer. His moving is underlined by the fact that wind blows up the lower part of his coat. Correspondingly, this first cameo of less than two seconds is voiced over with the first part of the slogan “This is about moving forward”. Cameo number two is even briefer and this time the president is shown averted from the viewer with his faced turned towards the sea. As a result, the addressee of the ad is encouraged to look over his shoulder and enjoy the broad expanse of the ocean on a sunny day (see appendix, fig. 7). This segment goes along with the statement “setting precedence for presidents”.

Despite the brevity of those two performances, President Lincoln’s representations serve several potential functions. As the Lincoln Motor Company was in need of getting rid of its square and boringly traditional image, it was no coincidence that the enterprise used Lincoln as the opener since they see “[h]is insistence on doing what others weren’t was what helped him stand apart” (“Finding”) and makes up a perfect match to the main message that is trying to be conveyed. Lincoln is supposed to stand for approaching new things from conviction. In the same context, looking back on Abraham Lincoln, who was in his way part of the founding and successful days of the Lincoln Motor Company, might help to recall its strength. Since Lincoln’s depiction and the rest of the commercial are set in modern days, one could argue that the best from the past has been preserved and is now enriched with new features. Furthermore, the creators of this promotional video apparently wanted to benefit from other characteristics President Lincoln is credited with. For example, as then-CEO of Ford’s Lincoln line stated, “The name Lincoln has very strong meaning for this country” [the U.S.] and stands for “independence, fortitude and elegant thinking” (Vlasic). The President’s providence and prudence is allegorized by his second cameo, as he is looking towards the horizon with, according to my interpretation, manifold opportunities lying ahead. Additionally, Lincoln serves as a connection to the company’s heritage of chauffeuring presidents. Although it was not the creators’ intention (Sanburn), the commercial arguably



benefited from the popularity of movie “Lincoln” that was released in the same year and, as is elucidated in this thesis, paying court to the former president (Lienert).

In summary it can be said that the spot makes use of several distinctive features that are linked with the president, e.g., prudence, elegance, and insistence, in order to revive the car brand “Lincoln”. What makes this ad special is the fact that Abraham Lincoln is not only the advertising character but also functions as name giver, which possibly amplifies the transfer of the aforementioned attributes on the brand.

### The Great Emancipator

#### Movie, *Lincoln*

Although director Steven Spielberg decided to confine himself to the last four months of Lincoln’s presidency only, the movie *Lincoln* makes up one of the most comprehensive examples of a glorifying representation of the sixteenth president in modern popular media. The director’s pick, preceded by a 12 year selection process (Ryzik C1), concentrates on the phase of Lincoln’s highest popularity and greatest achievement and, thus, sets the agenda of his representation per se. In his audio comments on the film, Spielberg mentions that he

thought that the most compelling thing [was] the fight to pass the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment on the floor of the House of Representatives. . . . We focused only on the last four months of Lincoln’s life because we wanted to show Lincoln accomplishing something great, something really monumental and that was abolishing slavery and ending the Civil War.  
(*Lincoln*)

Academy-award winner Spielberg thereby sets the tone and direction of the filming process and explicitly mentions his goal to outline two of Lincoln’s most prominent political achievements, which justifies my categorization of the movie to category one. In the following, I will focus on various representations of the president in different roles and circumstances and will then draw conclusions on the potential inherent functions of these, be it his role as commander in chief, president and statesman, family man, or emancipator—just to name a few examples. Certainly, the choice of exemplifying scenes is subjective and makes no claim to be complete. Nonetheless, I argue that I have carefully selected them and that they suffice to put across my line of argumentation. As a last step, I will offer a summary of the

potential reasons of various representations and try to answer the question about the portrayed reasons why Lincoln emancipated the slaves and ultimately abolished slavery.

After a short and brutal scene on a battlefield of the Civil War, where soldiers of North and South shoot and stab one another to death during heavy rain, Abraham Lincoln first appears in this motion picture while talking to soldiers in a camp and is in this way introduced to the audience in his role as commander-in-chief<sup>96</sup>. In contrast to the violent and savage preceding opening, Lincoln's first appearance takes place in a rather quiet surrounding. After a black soldier is shown reporting about his career in the army, the viewer distinguishes a fairly high-pitched voice asking the soldier off-screen "What's your name, soldier?". Then subsequently, the camera draws back and lets the audience see Lincoln from behind, allowing us to connect the aforementioned voice with him. It is not until then that the whole scenery is entirely visible: the commander in chief is sitting elevated on wooden boxes (see appendix, fig. 15), the Negro soldiers standing down below. One soldier addresses the inequalities Negro army members still have to face, even though they have been fighting for the white men and a dialog emerges in whose course the black soldier mentions a world in the future with black soldiers in upper ranks and "in a hundred years" enfranchised. After Lincoln shares an anecdote about his barber, two white soldiers join the scene. Whereas one of the latter shows a slightly funny lack of respect by asking Lincoln how tall he was, the other white expresses his admiration towards the president by quoting the Gettysburg Address from the start. After a banner cry and the president's request to join their companies, all but the rather critical Negro soldier go, whereas he continues quoting the Gettysburg Address from the point the white soldier stopped:

. . . that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

He turns around to leave and a close-up from Lincoln's face from the side is exposed before the screen fades to black.

Arguably, this early fraction of the movie serves as an introduction of the time setting; e.g., the viewer is informed that the war has been going on for several years—the Gettysburg Address had been delivered two years before and black soldiers are part of the northern army.

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<sup>96</sup> Chapter 1 "Opening Titles", 00:03.00

But most importantly, the screenwriter's choice of introducing Lincoln in his function of commander in chief, outside in the midst of the Civil War, expresses, in my opinion, the importance of the president in this function. Furthermore, even at this early moment into the movie, the viewer might already conceive Lincoln's general attitude. He does not hide and is very interested in and aware of his soldiers' lives on the battlefield; he is portrayed as a caring commander as he is interested in the names of the soldiers talking to him, like in other scenes<sup>97</sup> later in the film. Supporting this argument, Lincoln is willing to listen as he allows the soldier to bring forward his arguments and does not reprimand the man at arms who asked about his height. Also, the president's eagerness to build up a relationship to the people by using humorous anecdotes of everyday life becomes visible when talking about his experience with his barber. Thereby, Lincoln distracts the soldier from his negative and, to a certain extent provocative, attitude and eases him as the soldier leaves while quoting the final sentences of the Gettysburg Address. This rhetorical example is just the initial of many analogical elaborative techniques used by Lincoln throughout the movie, e.g., in a discussion with his cabinet members, which will be subject of discussion later on.

The screenwriters' choice of letting the white soldiers quote one of Lincoln's most famous speeches bears, in my view, at least two potential functions. First, the way that the white soldiers recite the address suggests that they are motivated by it. They learned it by heart, they are proud of being witnesses of Lincoln giving this speech two years before. Even the two African American soldiers can join in; an indication that they feel alike. I argue that the president was successful at reaching their hearts, thereby concurring with Roy Blount Jr., who argues Lincoln "went about . . . reaching people's hearts, or anyway their interests, so all the bloodshed would not be in vain." Second, it might serve to help explain to the viewer the reason for the war and thus, Lincoln's role as commander in chief, e.g., his highest goals mentioned in the Gettysburg Address to restore the union and to fight for equality—a greater cause than only the domestic abolishment of slavery. However, the recitation by the black soldier, a directly affected person actively involved in the war, towards the ending of the scene implies the probable function of reminding not only the viewer, but also Lincoln of

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<sup>97</sup> For instance when Lincoln visits a war hospital with his son Robbie he asks the wounded soldiers to "tell me your names as I go past. I like to know who I'm talkin' to."

what the Civil War is for, and thus, the soldier's personal citation and implied hope motivates Lincoln reciprocally.

But yet, in contrast to Lincoln's humble voice and friendly acting, the way he is placed within this scene potentially elevates him to a higher level: he is sitting up on a wooden box, sheltered from the rain, looking down on soldiers while being well-lit in those bad weather conditions. This appearance supports my assumption of his potential function of a caring commander in chief, almost exactly as displayed in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. This positive occurrence in combination to his similar pose in his memorial might serve as a trigger for the audience and sets positive tone for the upcoming storyline.

Further examples of Lincoln being displayed as commander-in-chief are more and more interwoven and closely linked with his presidential role. Thus, I will now elaborate on the politician Abraham Lincoln, thereby focusing on Spielberg's main purpose of the movie as he "did not want to make a movie about a monument . . . but wanted the audience to get into the working process of the president" (Blount). Here, I consequently lay two intertwined focuses: his policy and tactics on the one hand, and his rhetorical skills helping him implement his policies on the other.

In my view, the movie shows a clear explanation of Lincoln's intention in signing the Emancipation Proclamation and its legal weakness. It further captures the president's extreme exploiting of all legal measures—as well as beyond—to pass the thirteenth amendment to the constitution of the United States of America in order to abolish slavery for all times. The setting is clear: for the upcoming vote in the House of Representatives, Lincoln needs to unite his own Republican party as well as convince twenty Democrats to vote yes before the war is over, which is likely to happen since Southern delegates are willing to negotiate. Thus, Lincoln pursues a twofold policy, namely personally convincing his fellow but not consensual party members on the one hand, and allowing the way for fixers to buy votes by offering jobs to Democrats. A detailed analysis of Lincoln's very manifold rhetoric will reveal that he is depicted as an oral master and tactical genius and thus, according to my argumentation, possesses the potential of serving as a role model for today's politicians.

In his first talk with two fellow Republicans, among them Preston Blair—the founder of the party and, at the same time, leader of its conservative fraction—Lincoln chooses a familiar

and comfortable place in the White House. Blair's grown-up daughter as well as Lincoln's young son Bobby is also present. The whole discussion is characterized by Lincoln not taking part in the conversation much, but rather letting the others talk. A discussion between Blair and Bobby emerges through which the former addresses Lincoln only indirectly, nevertheless their request is made clear: The president can only count on the yeses of the conservatives when seeking negotiated peace and, consequently, he allows Blair to go to Richmond to talk to Jefferson Davis. The viewer does not witness an agreement but can infer this from the fact that Blair takes a carriage for Richmond. Here, Lincoln is at the very start of his various negotiations. I assume that he knows his own fellow party members well enough to see that he has to treat them calmly and to fulfill their demands.

As a next step, Lincoln needs the endorsement of his cabinet. I want to elaborate a bit here since in this intimate atmosphere I assume Lincoln discloses his honest view; there is no one around not to be trusted. The president starts the meeting by saying "Thunder forth, God of war", handing over to the Secretary of War, Mr. Edwin Stanton. While the Secretary is presenting his tactics to end the war by a sea bombardment, Lincoln stays calm in the background, sharpening his pencil with a knife. His only comment on the strategy is an exclamation "Old Neptune, shake thy hoary locks!" again alluding to the Roman god of the sea when referring to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles (Frum). After one of his cabinet members openly confronts him by asking why the nation's attention is not on Wilmington, other secretaries engage in a discussion about the Emancipation Proclamation and mutual criticism arouses. Out of nowhere, Lincoln joins the debate and illustrates the dilemma in a mixture of a true-to-life storytelling and statesmanlike behavior.

At first, the president starts in a very calm tone and admits that the Emancipation Proclamation was somewhere in between legal and illegitimate. In his remarks, the president then quickly turns away from the actual topic and comes up with a bittersweet anecdote of when he was a member of the legal circuit in Illinois. The story can be summed up as Lincoln taking justice in his own hands and let an old woman flee who killed her abusive husband.

Back when I rode the legal circuit in Illinois I defended a woman from Metamora named Melissa Goings, 77 years old, they said she murdered her husband; he was 83. He was choking her; and, uh, she grabbed ahold of a stick of firewood and fractured his skull, `n

he died. In his will he wrote "I expect she has killed me. If I get over it, I will have revenge.

*This gets a laugh.*

No one was keen to see her convicted; he was that kind of husband. I asked the prosecuting attorney if I might have a short conference with my client. And she and I went into a room in the courthouse, but I alone emerged. The window in the room was found to be wide open. It was believed the old lady may have climbed out of it. I told the bailiff right before I left her in the room she asked me where she could get a good drink of water, and I told her Tennessee.

Mrs. Goings was seen no more in Metamora. Enough justice had been done; they even forgave the bondsman her bail.

The story of Mrs. Goings potentially serves, in my view, as an analogy/allegory for Lincoln's role in the described dilemma. I see it as a sign that he might hope for forgiveness, even though his acting may not be legally right. But it is morally obliged. At a higher level, I argue, Lincoln excuses his legally questionable deeds by a moral necessity. Furthermore, he uses the rhetorical device because he possibly tries to bond with his men on a personal level, reach their emotional layer. This works to a certain extent as he earns some laughter and the general atmosphere appears more relaxed. However, when Secretary of the Interior John Usher intervenes by indicating that he does not (want to) understand the connection or relevancy of the story, Lincoln immediately uses a different rhetorical and linguistic register and switches to exhaustively elaborating, thereby unfolding his rhetorical skills but yet using a common language about war powers—a highly complex legal issue.

I decided that the Constitution gives me war powers, but no one knows just exactly what those powers are. Some say they don't exist. I don't know. I decided I needed them to exist to uphold my oath to protect the Constitution, which I decided meant that I could take the rebels' slaves from 'em as property confiscated in war. That might recommend to suspicion that I agree with the rebs that their slaves are property in the first place. Of course I don't, never have, I'm glad to see any man free, and if calling a man property, or war contraband, does the trick... Why I caught at the opportunity.

Now here's where it gets truly slippery. I use the law allowing for the seizure of property in a war knowing it applies only to the property of governments and citizens of

belligerent nations. But the South ain't a nation, that's why I can't negotiate with 'em. So if in fact the Negroes are property according to law, have I the right to take the rebels' property from 'em, if I insist they're rebels only, and not citizens of a belligerent country?

And slipperier still: I maintain it ain't our actual Southern states in rebellion, but only the rebels living in those states, the laws of which states remain in force. "The laws of which states remain in force." That means, that since it's states' laws that determine whether Negroes can be sold as slaves, as property - the Federal government doesn't have a say in that, least not yet - (a glance at Seward, THEN: - then Negroes in those states are slaves, hence property, hence my war powers allow me to confiscate 'em as such. So I confiscated 'em. But if I'm a respecter of states' laws, how then can I legally free 'em with my Proclamation, as I done, unless I'm cancelling states' laws?

I felt the war demanded it; my oath demanded it; I felt right with myself; and I hoped it was legal to do it, I'm hoping still.

Two years ago I proclaimed these people emancipated - "then, thenceforward and forever free." But let's say the courts decide I had no authority to do it. They might well decide that. Say there's no amendment abolishing slavery. Say it's after the war, and I can no longer use my war powers to just ignore the courts' decisions, like I sometimes felt I had to do. Might those people I freed be ordered back into slavery? That's why I'd like to get the Thirteenth Amendment through the House, and on its way to ratification by the states, wrap the whole slavery thing up, forever and aye. As soon as I'm able. Now. End of this month. And I'd like you to stand behind me. Like my cabinet's most always done."

*A moment's silence. . . (Lincoln)*

This quick change of both method and register signals his doubting cabinet member—and the viewer alike—that Lincoln is perfectly capable of using whatever method needed to illustrate a point and, at the same time, of altering his rhetorical policy. Even though an extensive linguistic analysis would go beyond the actual goal of this thesis, I would like to mention a few points nonetheless in order to draw inferences about the represented motivation and attitude of the president.

The monolog as a whole serves as an explanation to his cabinet—and the audience of the movie. In short, according to his explanation, he wants to avert the possibility for any court to revoke the Emancipation Proclamation once the war is over when, as a consequence thereof,

his war power are no longer. One could argue that his presidential authority would suffice to command his cabinet members, who were all appointed by him, to support it but he decides to take his time and give a very detailed reasoning of his thinking process, a justification in a way. This reveals him in a friendly light and the use of several rhetorical devices and alterations in his body language help him reach his goal, i.e., gaining his cabinet's support.

From the moment when Lincoln leaves the anecdote behind and turns to the detailed explanation, his body language changes for the first time. Whereas he has been mostly looking downward with his hands folded beneath the desk and his view looking downward as well, he now keeps his head up, sits straight up, and seeks eye-contact with his fellow politicians. This emphasizes, in my opinion, Lincoln's intention to demonstrate his supremacy. Along the same lines, in linguistic terms, he starts his explication by using a strong "I decided", followed by a short pause and repeats this phrase two more times within the first four sentences. Furthermore, the president makes gestures with his hands twice to underline an argument<sup>98</sup> as his sitting position now allows him to use both arms.

Moreover, Lincoln concludes the second topic/paragraph with a question. He probably does so to involve his listeners and guide them to arriving to his favored conclusion on their own; or at least make them think they did. In the next section, he uses the above-mentioned methods again, i.e., using his finger and closing a thought with a question to his listeners and he additionally strengthens his arguments by changing his sitting posture twice. While talking about the law and repeating a crucial sequence two times in a row, i.e., "the laws of which states remain in force", Abraham Lincoln is sitting a bit sideward, taking up, at least in my view, a more statesmanlike pose. I assume that this serves to highlight his ease and comfort when talking about law, a subject he is very familiar with. Then, he becomes very personal again by moving away from hard legal facts to his subjective feelings, e.g., "I felt", "I hoped", "I'm hoping still" and, thus, tries to appeal to his audience. The president does so by changing his pose once again, this time leaning to the front to be as close as possible to the cabinet members. In the ultimate paragraph, Lincoln quotes his own words from the Emancipation Proclamation, a document that is very likely approved by everyone in the room, slowly getting louder in his voice, more and more demanding just to conclude his remarks on the

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<sup>98</sup> Lincoln puts his finger up at "that might recommend" and grasping and underlining "why I caught the opportunity".



question of the thirteenth amendment with a rather softened request by asking “I’d like you to stand behind me. Like my cabinet’s most always done.”

Lastly, and I would say in typical Lincoln manner, he decides to finalize his discourse back on a personal level, with a humorous wisdom to be more precise, i.e., “[a]s the preacher said, I could write shorter sermons but once I start I get too lazy to stop”. Thus, Lincoln closes the circle and receives a good laugh from his addressees. He also returns to his modest, almost shy initial poise, i.e. looking downwards with shoulders down.

Whereas I believe that according to Lincoln’s liking the line of argumentation could have ended here, John Usher is not satisfied and confronts Lincoln with an accusation of showing dictator-like features. Opposing this allegation, the president uses the same means as before, namely a mixture of friendly, appealing language and severe, statesmanlike behavior—this time cramped into one short scene:

... I suppose. I signed the Emancipation Proclamation a year and half before my second election. I felt I was within my power to do it; however I also felt that I might be wrong about that; I knew the people would tell me. I gave ’em a year and half to think about it. And they re-elected me. And come February the first, I intend to sign the Thirteenth Amendment.

Once more, Lincoln begins rather moderately and expands on his insecurity and stresses his precarious feelings when signing the Emancipation Proclamation. But then he uses his strongest argument, namely the authorization and approval by his people through his reelection. Also, he stresses his unmistakable plan to sign the amendment by showing the pen that he intends to use and let it drop on the desk to show that this question is not up to discussion. Moreover, the moment he starts to utter “and come February the first...”, his modest posture changes into his determined one as he leans forward and looks full of resolution.

In summary, Lincoln is depicted as a president who is capable of adjusting to given different circumstances. His skills of leading a conversation not only involve rhetorical expertise but also other means, such as gestures, mimics, and altering his tone of voice. In terms of rhetorical devices, he varies between being appealing, uttering doubt, quoting, and asking question, thereby oftentimes letting, or at least pretending to let, the hearers become

part of the decision making process. He never loses his temper or respect, is friendly at any time and uses his authority to ask for support only when absolutely necessary.

The third group Lincoln has to convince and approach is the radical wing of his own party, who seem to be preparing a drastic amendment whose ultimate goal is not only to abolish slavery but to enfranchise all African Americans as well as to give them land and let the rebels pay for it. This time, the president chooses a different, twofold tactic, which I would like to analyze in order to further exemplify his tactical skills in politics.

As a first step, Lincoln decides to address the manager of the amendment, Representative James Ashley, a rather unimportant politician in comparison to Thaddeus Stevens, the leader of the radicals. I suppose that Lincoln is aware that Seward will talk to his fellow colleagues and considers this a preparation to his upcoming talk to Stevens (compare “so tell Mr. Stevens we expect him to put his back into it, it's not going to be easy, but we trust.”).

Abraham Lincoln, along with Secretary of State William Henry Seward, summons Ashley to the presidential office and arguably wants to catch him off-guard. The first thing the supposed victim sees when entering the office is Lincoln's son Willie, surreally sitting in a chair with a pipe in his mouth. Then Lincoln suddenly enters the room and approaches him with non-sense talking: “Why for instance is this thus, and what is the reason for this thusness?” while warmly shaking his hand and clapping him on the shoulder, which obviously makes him feel discombobulated<sup>99</sup>. A good-cop-bad-cop story develops as Lincoln steps in the background and leaves the floor to Seward, who straightforwardly asks Ashley to bring the amendment to debate immediately. As soon as Ashley utters his doubts and tries to explain the unlikelihood of success, Lincoln jumps in with an analogy:

We're whalers, Mr. Ashley! . . . We've been chasing this whale for a long time. We've finally placed a harpoon in the monster's back. It's in, James, it's in! We finish the deed now, we can't wait! Or with one flop of his tail he'll smash the boat and send us all to eternity!

While speaking, Lincoln rests his hands on both of Ashley's shoulders, in this way moving very close to the representative and enhancing his embarrassment. By using the analogy of a

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<sup>99</sup> “Lincoln shakes his hand and warmly claps the discombobulated but flattered representative on the shoulder” (Script “Lincoln”).

whale hunter, Lincoln alludes to several points at once. First, as he compares the whale with a monster, he incarnates the evil and makes slavery graspable, so to say. This also helps to stress the evil's danger, since "one flop of his tail" would be enough to kill. Hence, the fight against slavery is conveyed as a matter of life and death. The fact that Lincoln simulates the whale's stroke by slapping Ashley's shoulder underlines, in my opinion, the president's attempt to intimidate the radical. Lincoln's role in this conversation is now completed and his secretary takes over and orders staccato-like "On the 31st of this month. Of this year. Put the amendment up for a vote."

After the following expected internal discussion of the radical wing that can be summed up in that Stevens recommends expecting the unexpected from the president<sup>100</sup>, Lincoln himself has a private talk with Stevens in the kitchen of the White House in the course of a grand reception. This conversation takes place right after Mary Todd Lincoln had a very cynical talk to Stevens, through which the viewer gets to know that Stevens has been responsible for several probes of her household accounts in the White House. Now facing the most radical politician in terms of anti-slavery, Lincoln changes to a far more defensive tack when he tries to persuade Stevens not to opt for full equality for the time being.

Since we have the floor next in the debate, I thought I'd suggest you might...temper your contributions so as not to frighten our conservative friends?

The President commences the conversation standing next to the table and right from the very start he courts Stevens' favor and addresses him extremely cautiously, softening his inquiry ("I thought", "suggest", "you might") only to find out that he is biting on granite. First, Stevens distracts by putting Ashley's thoughts ahead, then uttering his own radical ideas upfront and forthrightly, even concluding his thoughts by making an indirect demand that he wants the nation to know about them having "such plans":

Stevens: "Ashley insists you're ensuring approval by dispensing patronage to otherwise undeserving Democrats."

Lincoln: "I can't ensure a single damn thing if you scare the whole House with talk of land appropriations and revolutionary tribunals and punitive thisses and thats –"

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<sup>100</sup> This scene will be investigated in the later course of this chapter

Stevens: “When the war ends, I intend to push for full equality, the Negro vote and much more. . . The nation needs to know that we have such plans.”

Interestingly, Lincoln does not leave the path of patience and understanding; he keeps standing while Stevens is limping through the room and is just about to pour some liquor. The host’s reply lets me surmise that he sees Stevens as too important and assesses him on par, even though the radical politician aggressively demands revenge and no mercy for the rebels.

Lincoln: „That's the untempered version of reconstruction. It's not... It's not exactly what I intend, but we shall oppose one another in the course of time. Now we're working together, and I'm asking you –“

Stevens: “For patience, I expect.

Lincoln: “When the people disagree, bringing them together requires going slow till they're ready to make up –“

In this phase of the conversation, the president is appealing for collaboration and again uses a very defensive style. Saying “it is not exactly what I intend” is a blander way of meaning “I am not of your opinion”. Furthermore, Lincoln chuckles in between and immediately sits down when Stevens takes a seat. Here, Lincoln does not face Stevens full frontal, but takes a more reserved, sideway position. The president seeks a partner for the time being and invites his fellow Republican by using the personal pronoun “we”, thereby making them equal and members of the same group. Afterwards, the president brings the people into play and faces more resistance, as he is confronted with an aggressive reply by Stevens:

Ah, shit on the people and what they want and what they're ready for! I don't give a goddamn about the people and what they want! This is the face of someone who has fought long and hard for the good of the people without caring much for any of 'em. And I look a lot worse without the wig. The people elected me! To represent them! To lead them! And I lead! You ought to try it!

Lincoln: “I admire your zeal, Mr. Stevens, and I have tried to profit from the example of it. But if I'd listened to you, I'd've declared every slave free the minute the first shell struck Fort Sumter; then the border states would've gone over to the confederacy, the war would've been lost and the Union along with it, and instead of abolishing slavery, as we

hope to do, in two weeks, we'd be watching helpless as infants as it spread from the American South into South America.”

Again, the president remains true to his pursued line and acts cautiously. Even after Stevens', in my view, forceful attack (“I lead! You ought to try it!”), he keeps calm and tries to raise profound reasons. After a face saving start (“I admire your zeal, Mr. Stevens and I have tried to profit from the example of it”), Lincoln shifts the topic from what he wants, i.e. Mr. Steven's restraint from his radical approach, to a more insightful justification. Here, the President uses the means of imagery as he displays for Stevens what would have happened if he had listened to him and, furthermore, Lincoln increases the worst case scenario by imaging the spread of slavery to South America, whereby he addresses a greater good and the huge importance of the success of his mission.

In the further run of the conversation, Representative Stevens likewise sticks to his boldness, this time coming up with an image/allegory of the failure of white people's inner compass: “You know that the inner compass that should direct the soul toward justice has ossified in white men and women, north and south, unto utter uselessness through tolerating the evil of slavery”. Lincoln's reply absolutely underlines his rhetorical skills and capability of reacting swiftly. Interestingly enough, Daniel Day-Lewis interpreted the script differently and did not apply the screenwriters instruction, namely to “reach[es] over to Stevens and give[s] his shoulder a vigorous shake”. In my way of thinking, this rather corresponds to Lincoln's previous depiction in this movie and supports my thesis of his cautious approach.

Lincoln: “A compass, I learnt when I was surveying, it'll - it'll point you True North from where you're standing, but it's got no advice about the swamps and deserts and chasms that you'll encounter along the way. If in pursuit of your destination you plunge ahead, heedless of obstacles, and achieve nothing more than to sink in a swamp, what's the use of knowing True North?”

The president's cleverness becomes noticeable when he seizes Stevens' idea of a compass and uses it to beat him at his own game, proving that he himself is the true expert in this field. Not only does Lincoln mention that he learnt surveying—that makes him, along with the

elsewhere demonstrated knowledge of law, politics, and some mathematics<sup>101</sup>, a very educated person—but he also makes use of this figurative approach and turns it to his own advantage. Still aiming at the same goal, i.e. illustrating Stevens that sometimes the longer, thorough way is the right one, Lincoln again employs figurative speech and, also again, ends his observation with an open question that leaves the dialog partner thinking.

I agree with Roy Blount Jr. who states in his article for the Smithsonian Magazine, that the compass scene is a “key moment in the movie” (Blount). Here, one of Lincoln’s most inner principles becomes graspable and bridges to an important potential function of this behavior, i.e., serving as a role model for today’s people, be it the leading class or politicians explicitly, or as Blount puts it “[i]t is also something that I wish more people would take to heart—people I talk with about politics, especially people I agree with.”. Pat Fiorenza supports my argumentation in his blog and states that no matter if

leaders, managers, employees, and whatever hat we put on a day-to-day basis, Lincoln has identified the core challenge for us. Constantly there is a tension between our moral compass and the reality of environment and surroundings. . . . The Lincoln film challenges us to know that sometimes the journey will be rough, and our obligation is to have people follow us along the way and steer them towards true north.” (Fiorenza)

Jonathan Freedland reduces the same scene to the question of principal versus pragmatism and allocates Lincoln the latter. Even though Freedland adds a new facet, namely that today’s politics might have become too much about avoiding swamps and therefore giving ideas of desirable “true norths”, the bottom line remains valid: this scene has become part of a popular discussion both in terms of rhetoric and policies and offers potential functions for various audience, amongst them the most important message to use a tactical wise, adjustable and ripe plan, and not the fastest.

In my opinion, the way in which President Lincoln uses his outstanding rhetorical skills and eloquence is very remarkable and would be worth additional investigation as there are various further examples that underline how the president utilizes the power of words to achieve different goals. The whole plot itself is not characterized by action scenes but by

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<sup>101</sup> Lincoln’s reference to Euclid while talking to the two telegraphers “I never had much of schooling, but I read Euclid, in an old book I borrowed.” Through this, the viewer does not only get to know of his mathematical interest but also about his autodidactic and intrinsic motivation.

dialogues and conversations and I assume that this choice was made by the filmmakers inherently and shall communicate the viewer the importance and significance of eloquence. Further examples of Lincoln's depicted oral skills are his dedication of a new flagpole in front of the Treasury or the flashback to his second inaugural address at the very end of the movie. However, I have sufficiently demonstrated his rhetorical skills for my purposes. And since the president's oral remarks are mostly interwoven with policy-like topics, I run the risk of accommodating too many things at a time. Hence, I shift from a rhetorical analysis of those mentioned speeches—that have been publicly available and analyzed many times anyhow—towards focusing on a description and estimation of the development of Lincoln's presumed policies. Before being sufficiently able to do so, I intend to bring forward a reflection of other insights the movie gives us, focusing on how others view him and describe his inner struggles, including his displayed relationship to his wife and children.

Another important step in the analysis of Lincoln's depiction in this motion picture is how he is seen and described by other characters. Whereas I have so far only drawn conclusions from Lincoln's acting itself, I now change over to consider “the outside” in order to outline potential functions of an indirect representation of the president through other characters providing information about him. Hence, I want to concentrate on a closer look at his cabinet members, political opponents, and the people. Doing so, I will adjoin a discussion on how Lincoln's family views him to the subsequent section in which I will return back and elaborate on the “inside Lincoln” and inner struggles, including an investigation of his relationship to his family.

The cabinet members' relationship towards their superior could be described as forthright and sincere. On several occasions, they confront him openly and strongly demand him to drop the thirteenth amendment in favor of immediate peace<sup>102</sup>. Also, single ministers talk and address their president very openly, for instance, the Secretary of State is in a rage when he realizes that Lincoln did not inform him about an existing peace offer and his Secretary of War explodes when Lincoln is about to ease a situation by presenting another anecdote<sup>103</sup>. However, and this is the most important line in terms of drawing inferences on Lincoln's

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<sup>102</sup> For example John Usher to Lincoln: “You signed the Emancipation Proclamation, you've done all that can be expected” (Chapter 4 “War Powers” 00:25.15)

<sup>103</sup> Stanton to Lincoln: No! No, you're, you're going to tell a story! I don't believe that I can bear to listen to another one of your stories right now!” (Chapter 9 “The Fallen at Willmington 01:01.20)

depiction, whenever Lincoln exercises his authority, any discussion ends and the president can rely on his ministers' support ("Like my cabinet's most always done."<sup>104</sup>). The meeting to discuss the bombardment of Wilmington serves as well as an example as his discussion with Secretary of State who initially tries to convince him to drop the amendment and in the end offers a delay of ten days to push the amendment through<sup>105</sup>. Altogether, Lincoln is depicted as a president who allows heated debates, makes up his mind during those, but when convinced of his position, enforces his ideas and shows total control—without losing his cabinets' support. Hence, I argue, the illustration of his way of leading contains a strong potential of serving an ideal conception for leaders in different modern locations.

By looking at the radical group of the Republican party headed by Stevens, I take a step from Lincoln's inner circle towards a group that indeed belongs to the same party as the president, but fights for a more drastic approach in respect of emancipation and anti-slavery. A scene which takes place right after Lincoln's attempt at taking influence on Ashley with the analogy of a whaler in Thaddeus Stevens' capitol office serves as a good example of the radicals' view on Lincoln. Present in the room are Ashley, Speaker of the House Colfax, Senator Wade and Litton.

Wade: "Whalers?"

Ashley: "That's what he said."

Wade: "The man's never been near a whale ship in his life! (to Stevens:) Withdraw radical support, force him to abandon this scheme, whatever he's up to - He drags his feet about everything, Lincoln; why this urgency? We got it through the Senate without difficulty because we had the numbers. Come December you'll have the same in the House. The amendment'll be the easy work of ten minutes."

Litton: "He's using the threat of the amendment to frighten the rebels into an immediate surrender."

Colfax: "I imagine we'd rejoice to see that."

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<sup>104</sup> Chapter 4 "War Powers" 00:30.35

<sup>105</sup> Seward to Lincoln: "The peace delegation might encounter delays as they travel up the James River. Particularly with the fighting around Wilmington. Within ten days' time, we might pass the Thirteenth Amendment."



Litton: "Will you rejoice when the Southern states have re-joined the Union, pell-mell, as Lincoln intends them to, and one by one each refuses to ratify the amendment? If we pass it, which we won't. (to Stevens:) Why are we co-operating with, with him? We all know what he's doing and we all know what he'll do. We can't offer up abolition's best legal prayer to his games and tricks."

Wade: "He's said he'd welcome the South back with all its slaves in chains."

Ashley: "Three years ago he said that! To calm the Border States when we were-

Stevens: "I don't.

*This confuses the room. Stevens turns to Vintner Litton.*

"You said 'we all know what he'll do'. I don't know. "

Litton: "You know he isn't to be trusted."

Stevens: "Trust? I'm sorry, I was under the misapprehension your chosen profession was politics. I've never trusted the President. I never trust anyone. But... Hasn't he surprised you?"

Litton: "No, Mr. Stevens, he hasn't."

Stevens: "Nothing surprises you, Asa, therefore nothing about you is surprising. Perhaps that is why your constituents did not re-elect you to the coming term.

*(collecting his cane and standing)*

"It's late, I'm old, I'm going home.

*Stevens limps to the door, opens it, and turns.*

"Lincoln the inveterate dawdler, Lincoln the Southerner, Lincoln the capitulating compromiser, our adversary - and leader of the godforsaken Republican Party, our party - Abraham Lincoln has asked us to work with him to accomplish the death of slavery in America. Retain, even in opposition, your capacity for astonishment."

*Stevens leaves, shutting the door.*

In this short discussion, several opinions on Lincoln become apparent. First, Stevens and Wade describe how the president has been characterized before, namely being a politician

who likes to protract processes (“He drags his feet about everything”, “Lincoln the inveterate dawdler”) and who acts too lightly towards the South and/or political opponents (“Lincoln the Southerner, Lincoln the capitulating compromiser“). Furthermore, the president is described as acting unpredictably as none of the radicals seems sure what Lincoln is up to and everyone speculates about the president’s motivations in accelerating the vote of the amendment, or more specifically if Lincoln is using the amendment just as a means to threaten the South into surrender without any permanent interest. (“You know he isn't to be trusted”, “Will you rejoice when the Southern states have re-joined the Union, pell-mell, as Lincoln intends them to, and one by one each refuses to ratify the amendment?”). Finally, Stevens, as the leader of the radical wing, asks his fellows to stay vigilant and is not averse to considering the idea for greater good and the ultimate goal of his fraction of the party, i.e., the ultimate abolishment of slavery. A different scene, which has already been subject of discussion in a different context, takes the same line. During their private talk in the kitchen of the White House, Stevens accuses Lincoln of not leading and, thereby, demonstrates their differing approaches. The radical leader wants the president to care less about the people and finds him too hesitant. However, besides all the critique coming from the radical section, I claim that the depiction of the various criticisms Lincoln has to face from his own party does not have the function of demystifying him and I reason this because of least two causes. First, I claim that the outcome of the plot, i.e., the successful ratification of the thirteenth amendment with help of the radical wing, speaks for itself. Lincoln’s manner and method to wait for the right moment was successful in convincing Stevens and the whole radical wing to act alike and implicates great leadership skills. Second, my assumption is supported by one of the last scenes of the motion picture, when I see Stevens respectfully complimenting Lincoln by referring to him as “the purest man in America”<sup>106</sup>.

As might be expected, the Democratic Party, the pro-slavery counter draft to Lincoln’s Republican Party, heavily criticizes the president on several occasions and serves as an antipode within the Union. In my view, the most blatant example is Fernando Wood’s speech<sup>107</sup> before the House of Representatives, in excerpts below, and I understand that Wood

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<sup>106</sup> “The greatest measure of the Nineteenth Century. Passed by corruption, aided and abetted by the purest man in America.”.

<sup>107</sup> Fernando Wood, Representative of New York, Chapter 5, “The House Debate“

speaks on behalf of the whole fraction since his remarks are accompanied by applause and positive acclamation through his fellows.

Estimable colleagues. Two bloody years ago this month, his Highness, King Abraham Africanus the First - our Great Usurping Caesar, violator of habeas corpus and freedom of the press, abuser of states' rights [interrupted] radical republican autocrat, ruling by fiat and martial law - affixed his name to his heinous and illicit Emancipation Proclamation, promising it would hasten the end of the war, which yet rages on and on. He claimed, as tyrants do, that the war's emergencies permitted him to turn our army into the unwilling instrument of his monarchical and radical Republicanism's abolitionist fanaticism! His Emancipation Proclamation has obliterated millions of dollars' worth of personal property rights... but all that was not enough for this dictator who now seeks to insinuate miscegenist pollution into the Constitution itself . . .

Wood's comes across with a very harsh volley of expletives towards the president as he aggressively calls Lincoln "King Abraham Africanus", "Great Usurping Caesar", "radical autocrat", "dictator", and "tyrant". The representative also declares the president's politics to having monarchical and fanatic traits. But besides his pithy nicknaming, Wood becomes more explicit and specifies his accusations. For one thing, he alleges the president violated several rights, among them the suspension of habeas corpus and press rights as well as violating states, army and property rights; for another thing Wood complains that despite Lincoln's announcement, the war still has not ended after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and, obviously, is totally against the thirteenth amendment. Even though the majority of accusations clearly refer to the time before the movie starts, the listing of so many examples of accusations by the political opponent, particularly without clearing them up afterwards, leaves, as far as I can see, at least a negative aftertaste and might serve as to invite the viewer to have a more critical look at Lincoln.

Another example that has the potential of giving the audience food for more critical thought on the president's politics is how the Southern delegation acts in the face of Lincoln during the peace negotiations just before surrender. Here, he mentions that if the South had "kept faith with democratic process, as frustrating as that can be..." just to be immediately interrupted by the Southerners:

Come sir, spare us at least these pieties. Did you defeat us with ballots? . . . “How've you held your Union together? Through democracy? How many hundreds of thousands have died during your administration? Your Union, sir, is bonded in cannonfire and death.

Although Lincoln's reaction is fairly defensive and would be worth an investigation with regard to his rhetorical way of elegantly averting an oral assault, it is at this point sufficient for my current investigation to state that this short attack conceivably implements a thought-provoking impulse in the viewer's minds. Since Lincoln does not deny it, I assume, the viewer might agree with the South to some extent and, in combination with other examples of the movie, such as Lincoln's order to bribe and lie, come to the conclusion that the president is by far no moral crusader.

In contrast, and this brings me to the conclusion that Lincoln is generally supposed to be represented in a very good light, the president is oftentimes shown as very popular among and close to his people. On several occasions, the viewer gets to see common people waiting in the White House to make personal requests, Mr. and Mrs. Jolly are even shown during such a private audience with the president. Moreover, Lincoln attracts huge audiences during his speeches and is warmly celebrated at the River Queen. Besides, his wife, his son Todd, and his Secretary of State refer to the love of the people<sup>108</sup>; Seward even speaks of “semi-divine stature”. More positively, in contrast to both Mary Todd<sup>109</sup> and Secretary Steward<sup>110</sup> who do not want him to jeopardize his popularity at the expense of an exhausting fight against slavery with an insecure outcome, Lincoln seems to consider his popularity as a command or order and avails himself of this popularity for the greater cause as “the fate of human dignity in [his] hands”<sup>111</sup>, i.e. the abolishment of slavery for all times.

Altogether, the above-mentioned representations of external views on Lincoln offer various critical approaches towards Lincoln's politics and policy; however, at least to my interpretation, it only serves to give the other side “some voice”. On the whole, those criticisms are not represented directly and strong enough to let me think they function as a

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<sup>108</sup> Mary Todd Lincoln during reception and in private chamber, Todd: “They don't throw things at me cuz you are so popular.”, Seward in carriage and office.

<sup>109</sup> “Don't, don't waste that power on an amendment bill that's sure of defeat.”

<sup>110</sup> “Why tarnish your invaluable luster with a battle in the House? It's a rats' nest in there, the same gang of talentless hicks and hacks that rejected the amendment ten months back. We'll lose.”

<sup>111</sup> Lincoln while talking to his cabinet in his office at night.

demystifying means since the positive accentuation of the greater weal outshines everything else. Also, the president weighs the majority of external criticism but in the end and keeps the reins of power and control, be it within his cabinet, party, against the democrats, or the Southern delegates.

As announced, I would now like to draw the attention away from the description of external views on Lincoln towards a closer look at the “inside”. I assume that certain representations within the movie allow me to examine potential inferences about his inner being, for example, his acting as a family man, his dreams and sleep disorder, his coping with bereavement, personal thoughts, and ethical views in general. Since all of those examples show potentially vulnerable characteristics and make up a decent share of the plot, I argue, it is worth an investigation to draw conclusions about Lincoln’s inner conflicts and attitudes and, as a subsequent step, about their potential functions.

Very early in the movie, right after the previously discussed introduction of Lincoln as commander in chief, he is shown in a very surreal, black-and-white dream sequence. There, he stands, all alone on deck of a fast-moving steamship in darkness (see appendix, fig. 16). From all appearances, the naval vessel is heading towards a shore-line. The setting is blurry and odd. Lincoln tells his wife about his dream:

It's nighttime. The ship's moved by some terrible power, at a terrific speed. Though it's imperceptible in the darkness, I have an intuition that we're headed towards a shore. No one else seems to be aboard the vessel.

I'm alone. I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space...were it not that I have bad dreams. I reckon it's the speed that's strange to me. I'm used to going a deliberate pace.

On the one hand, I conclude that the filmmakers decided to include this scene in order to show that Lincoln is very tense owing to the ongoing civil war and that his worries are following him even at nighttime. The fact that he is standing alone and that the vessel is moving at high speed without offering any railing or other safety measures leads me to the hypothesis that Lincoln has passed the point of no return and is willing to enforce the actions he has started. On the other hand, despite the rather dangerous situation described, Lincoln is standing upright and calm on deck. This lets me assume that he believes devoutly in the

rightness of his actions. In the course of his talking to his wife, the viewer not only gets a first impression of her—at least at times—demanding character, which will be touched upon in the next subchapter. It is she who comes up with the interpretative approach that the dream does not refer to the upcoming battle of Wilmington, but that it is about the thirteenth amendment—thereby moving the amendment to the very center of the plot.

I must admit that the interpretation of dreams is a rather vague subject; however, as part of a fictional story, it has the function of leaving room for speculation and interpretation to the viewer per se. Also, this scene is not the only one dealing with the president's sleeping disorder.

In a further sequence, Lincoln is shown working at an overloaded desk late at night, right after having received General Grant's telegraph about the chance of immediate peace. In my view, Lincoln's appearance in this scene mirrors his inner struggle and the pressures of time, as the storyline describes the setting:

Lincoln sits before an open window. He's disheveled, in shirtsleeves an unbuttoned vest, next to an inkwell, papers and books of law scattered about, and a lit candle in a candlestick, guttering. Grant's telegraph is in one hand, and in the other hand, his spectacles and, dangling from a chain, his open pocket watch. His bare left foot keeps time with the watch's loud ticking. He stares out into the cold night.

Immediately after, he is wandering through the White House at 3.40am, coping with another problem—thereby concurring with the aforementioned scene of sleeplessness and sorrow as he still seems restless, full of thoughts, and worries. Eventually, he stops by at John Hay and John Nicolay's bedroom and wakes them up, indirectly asking for advice on one of the many petitions he has to handle. This scene also offers the potential to represent Lincoln as a very thorough president who still, even in this stressful period, finds the time to answer various petitions. In wartime, with hundreds of thousands of people killed, he still takes care of every single victim that can be avoided.

Then, the president turns his attention back to the preceding case of General Grant's telegraph and the decision of whether to allow the Southern delegation to come to Washington or not. In this crucial situation, he initially prefers to be alone, rejecting Hay's offer to accompany him by saying in "[t]imes like this, I'm best alone." However, before

having a previously dictated answer transmitted to Grant via telegraph—which would have allowed the Southern delegation to come to Washington—he starts a conversation with the two young telegraphers with two philosophical questions: “You think we choose to be born?” and “Are we fitted to the times we're born into?”.<sup>112</sup> Whereas the questioned appear to be having problems to cope with these highly complex issues, Lincoln nevertheless defers to one of the boy’s references as an engineer and deduces from Euclid’s axioms that “[t]hings which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other” and considers this to be self-evident and to be the origin of balance, fairness, and justice.<sup>113</sup> Lincoln then reconsiders his dictated text and eventually goes back on his previous decision, now ordering the delegation to wait in Virginia. Again, Lincoln does only seemingly deals with this problem, his struggle, by himself. Instead, he seems to be making up his mind while talking to other people<sup>114</sup>, balancing the pros and cons. In this example, Lincoln comes to the conclusion that all aspects that have been brought forward by his fellow people are not strong enough if compared to the “self-evident truth”, which enables him to stick to his principals and aspiration to abolish slavery. I do not interpret his behavior as a weakness. On the contrary, I consider his seeking advice to be a noble idea. Hence, this scene potentially serves as an inspiring example for viewers who face a huge decision, along the lines to check and countercheck your views with other opinions.

For the purpose of making more suppositions about Abraham Lincoln’s “inside”, I will now focus on his most intimate fellows, i.e., his family. However, I do not try to analyze or characterize his single family members but I want to find out what their behavior towards Lincoln, and his behavior towards them respectively, tells me about Lincoln as a person. In this context, I will elaborate on his relationship to his wife, to his oldest son Robbie, his other living son Tad, and to his deceased son Willie and to his father.

Lincoln’s wife Mary Todd, or more specifically his relationship to her, occupies an ambiguous role. On the face of it, she appears in public in full support of her husband. For

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<sup>112</sup> These questions were put on Facebook as subject of discussion, over 180 people answered and took part. This serves as a proof of popularity due to its interactiveness.

<sup>113</sup> “Euclid’s first common notion is this: “Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other. That’s a rule of mathematical reasoning. It’s true because it works; has done and always will do. In his book, Euclid says this is “self-evident. D’you see? There it is, even in that two-thousand year old book of mechanical law: it is a self-evident truth that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other. We begin with equality. That’s the origin, isn’t it? That balance, that’s fairness, that’s justice.”

<sup>114</sup> Scene “No sixteen-years-old left” when Lincoln wakes up two boys to discuss this matter late at night.

example, she attends most of the debates in the House of Representatives and she prepares and leads a grand evening reception as “Madame President”, while giving political support to her husband. But the viewer is allowed an insight view on the president’s wife in numerous scenes and this, according to my interpretation, puts a different complexion on her. Most of the encounters between Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln have a potential of conflicts<sup>115</sup>. The aforementioned dream scene serves as a first example. Here, Mary Todd initially acts apprehensively and thoughtfully as she encourages her husband to tell her about his bad dreams, but soon it turns out that she is dissatisfied when she realizes that Abraham does not involve her in his political thinking process. (“Stuff! You tell me dreams, that’s all, I’m your soothsayer, that’s all I am anymore, I’m not to be trusted with.”) She reacts sniffily and attacks the president. Only after she confronts him with another interpretation of his dream and his turning away, would she become pleased again.<sup>116</sup> Another example where she (successfully) tries to take influence on his political actions is a scene that takes place in their box while attending a play. Whispering, she advises Lincoln to take over control in terms of canvassing in a very determined way (“Seward can’t do it. You must. Because if you fail to secure the necessary votes, woe unto you, sir. You will answer to me.”) The most striking example, however, is a bitter discussion that both have after Abraham carefully suggested that he considered assigning their oldest son Robbie a safe job with the army. During this argument, Mary Todd blames and insults her husband several times, amongst other things about him favoring Tad over Robbie and Lincoln having not supported her enough in her grieving. Furthermore, the viewer gets to know that the president’s wife was close to madness at that time<sup>117</sup>. Lincoln counters, for his standards, furiously<sup>118</sup> but, in the end, withstands her provoking and stays argumentative. What is important for this thesis is that Lincoln is depicted as a husband who is admittedly influenced by a strong wife, yet capable of standing up to her. Beyond that, he stands by his wife even in testing times and it is my impression that Lincoln should be represented as patient and easing. Furthermore, in the course of the

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<sup>115</sup> I here slightly object to Nicholas Roland who describes her portrayal as “more or less sympathetic”.

<sup>116</sup> The script reads: “That’s the ship you’re sailing on. The Thirteenth Amendment. You needn’t tell me I’m right. I know I am.” She watches as he leaves the room, smiling in bitter victory: she’s right.

<sup>117</sup> “And if I refuse to take the high road, if I won’t take up the rough old cross, will you threaten me again with the madhouse, as you did when I couldn’t stop crying over Willie, when I showed you what heartbreak, real heartbreak looked like, and you hadn’t the courage to countenance it, to help me...”

<sup>118</sup> “Just, just this once, Mrs. Lincoln, I demand of you to try and take the liberal and not the selfish point of view!” and “I should have clapped you in the madhouse!”



argument, the president allows insight to his very intimate feelings when defending his behavior regarding his mourning:

I couldn't tolerate you grieving so for Willie because I couldn't permit it in myself, though I wanted to, Mary. I wanted to crawl under the earth, into the vault with his coffin. I still do. Every day I do. Don't... talk to me about grief.

I must make my decisions, Bob must make his, you yours. And bear what we must, hold and carry what we must. What I carry within me – you must allow me to do it, alone as I must. And you alone, Mary, you alone may lighten this burden, or render it intolerable. As you choose.

At this point, the viewer learns about Lincoln's unsuccessful coping with the loss of his son first-hand through this emotional explanation. Certainly, this could be understood as a sign of weakness, but in my view, this soft way of resolving the conflict has more potential of boosting Lincoln's esteem in the eye of the observer. With the surprising information about his inner sorrows and him leaving the argument in a mild tone, I assume that this offers a potential target for admiration since he is capable of successfully running a country despite of great personal misfortunes.

Abraham Lincoln's relationship to his oldest son Robbie is also not an example of harmony and peace. However, it tells us a lot about Lincoln's comprehension of fatherhood and lets me infer more about his principles. Most of the encounters between father and son, just as those between the married couple, harbor much conflict potential and Lincoln's general attitude seems a bit neglectful in the first place. For instance, he seems to have forgotten about his son's homecoming<sup>119</sup> and does not pay much attention when Robbie finally arrives, interrupting his father in a discussion. In my opinion, this would not have had any negative impact if Lincoln had not let in his other son Tad in a similar situation. The biggest clash, however, is about Robbie's sincere wish to join the army and leave college. Lincoln vigorously forbids his son to do so, even taking advantage of his position as commander in chief, trying to protect his offspring.<sup>120</sup> Lincoln even tries to convince his first-born about the danger of the war by taking him to a hospital where Robbie witnesses the

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<sup>119</sup> Mary Todd Lincoln: "Did you remember Robert's coming home for the reception? . . . I knew you'd forget."

<sup>120</sup> "I'm commander-in-chief, so in point of fact, without my permission, you ain't enlisting in nothing, nowhere, young man."

horrors of wartime firsthand. However, as his son's will does not diminish and lets Lincoln realize how difficult it must be for the young man to follow his footsteps<sup>121</sup>, he changes his mind and eventually overcomes even his wife's threat to make their oldest son part of the army, although only placing him in a safe position as an adjutant running messages. In my view, Lincoln's behavior gives at least reason for criticism since he—especially in comparison to his attitude towards his younger son Tad—treats Robbie unfeelingly at first sight. However, I come to the conclusion that the father's acting might somewhat be affected by—and thus appearing excusable—a protective instinct. The reproach that Lincoln favors his younger son Tad over Robbie seems hard to be argued away, as the representation of the other father-son-relationship reveals.

On the other side, the head of the family is also shown as a very caring father whenever he is around with his younger son Tad. For example, and this makes up a heavy contrast, he pauses a discussion when Tad knocks at the door<sup>122</sup> or even takes him with him to business matters<sup>123</sup>. Furthermore, Lincoln is shown bringing Tad to bed late at night when his son fell asleep in front of the fireplace. The choice of the filmmakers to bring in Tad in two important scenes leads me to assume that they intended to highlight the close relationship between the two. First, Lincoln is playing with his son in his office while the vote is taking place in the House of Representatives and, second, instead of showing the assassination of the president, the viewer gets to see how Tad is attending a different theater play and there learns about the death of his beloved father. I argue that Tad, in the form of a young child, bears the potential of serving as a symbol for the generations to come and, thus, leads to Lincoln's depiction as a liberator. This assumption is supported by the incidences where Tad plays with large photographic negatives of young boy slaves. These pictures possibly let the father think of the injustice and Tad's naïve questions about slavery<sup>124</sup>, that express his incomprehension of this inhuman topic, confirm Lincoln's willing to end this inhumanity. Also, Lincoln might

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<sup>121</sup> "I won't be you, pa. I can't do that. But I don't want to be nothing."

<sup>122</sup> During talking to Seward there is a sharp knock at the door, followed by two long ones, which obviously works as a secret code. Lincoln responds to it by saying "Pardon me, that's a distress signal, which I am bound by solemn oath to respond to."

<sup>123</sup> Tad is taking part in the conversation with the Blair family

<sup>124</sup> "Why do some slaves cost more than others?"; "When you were a slave, Mr. Slade, did they beat you?"

remember his own childhood, which was not filled with love<sup>125</sup>, and wants to provide a better place for the next generations.

At the time the movie plot is set, the Lincolns' son Willie has already been dead for three years. Nevertheless, he still has great impact on the general mood as the loss of him seems to overshadow the Lincolns' life still tremendously. All family members, except Robbie, explicitly mention that they miss Willie<sup>126</sup>. Important for my context is the president's connection to these severe circumstances. First, it impedes his role as a father and husband since his beloved family members are in deep mourning and, second, the viewer gets to know that his personal grief brings him to the edge of his capability as a human—including every of his deeds. When his wife blames herself for not having done enough during Willie's sickness ("He was a very sick little boy. We should've cancelled that reception, shouldn't we."), it is not explicitly mentioned that Abraham shares her thoughts, but I infer from his answer ("Three years ago, the war was going so badly, and we had to put on a face. . . Molly. It's too hard. Too hard.") that the president himself is full of sorrow and self-doubts as well, before he openly admits his inner weakness later on:

I couldn't tolerate you grieving so for Willie because I couldn't permit it in myself, though I wanted to, Mary. I wanted to crawl under the earth, into the vault with his coffin. I still do. Every day I do. Don't... talk to me about grief.

However, I claim that this revelation of Abraham Lincoln's inner struggle does not serve to weaken the president's aura or anything alike but it holds the potential of making him look human and more approachable. As already outlined when talking about his relationship to his wife Mary Todd, it rather enhances the potential for admiration by today's audience. Also, his grieving for his son might have served, even maybe in small part, as an explanation for his will to abolish slavery, as Lincoln fights for generations to come<sup>127</sup> and wants to create a better world for (his) children.

Another family member who is not pictured in the film but is mentioned is Lincoln's father. Similar to the aforementioned relationship between Lincoln and his late son Willie, the

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<sup>125</sup> "Loving kindness, that most ordinary thing, came to me from other sources."

<sup>126</sup> The parents Mary Todd and Abraham in two scenes in the sleeping room, Tad after sleeping in front of the fire place.

<sup>127</sup> "for all coming time, not only of the millions now in bondage but of unborn millions to come."

screenwriter's decision to mention Lincoln's dead father provides me with the chance of drawing more inferences about the president. When talking about his relationship to his begetter, Lincoln states:

I saw a barge once, Mr. Yeaman, filled with colored men in chains, heading down the Mississippi to the New Orleans slave markets. It sickened me, `n more than that, it brought a shadow down, a pall around my eyes. Slavery troubled me, as long as I can remember, in a way it never troubled my father, though he hated it. In his own fashion. He knew no smallholding dirt farmer could compete with slave plantations. He took us out from Kentucky to get away from `em. He wanted Indiana kept free. He wasn't a kind man, but there was a rough moral urge for fairness, for freedom in him. I learnt that from him, I suppose, if little else from him. We didn't care for one another, Mr. Yeaman . . . Loving kindness, that most ordinary thing, came to me from other sources. I'm grateful for that.

I learn at least three things out of this excerpt that are important in regard to Lincoln's depiction. First, this statement dates the origins of Lincoln's animosity against slavery back to his childhood and, thus, emphasizes his inner disgust. This assists my former assumption that the movie wants to place Lincoln as an emancipator of the slaves without giving much room for the critique that he only favored emancipation as a war measure. Second, the viewer is told that his father instilled "a moral urge for fairness, for freedom" in him. Thus, those very important principles and basis of his politics and policies were made up at a very early stage of his life as well. The dislike of slavery, however, sprang from different reasons. Third, I conclude that Lincoln considers love and kindness to be important, even though we get to know that his relationship to his father was not enriched with these feelings.

All in all, the various relationships to his family members reveal a manifold depiction of Abraham Lincoln's character and help to install him as an authentic and human being with inner struggles who has to cope with family problems that seem to overshadow his acting. Furthermore, I concluded that the president seeks both power and motivation from his role as a father.

In summary it can be stated that the motion picture "Lincoln" offers a very positive depiction of the sixteenth president of the United States of America, without totally neglecting critical approaches. I have shown numerous examples of Lincoln's rhetorical and verbal tactical skills

and his successful dealing with different groups that help him realize his political goals. Thereby I have deliberately stood back from analyzing the various political speeches that are already objects of study and concentrated on the—to some extent fictional—depictions and storytelling within the movie. In addition to that, the storyline of the movie takes a clear stand on the question on Lincoln's motives to abolish slavery—which is controversially discussed within academia—and communicates to the viewer that abolition happened for humanitarian reasons. According to the movie, Lincoln's aversion against the unjust instrument of slavery has been with him all his life. The implementation of the thirteenth amendment makes up the core of the film and sidelines Lincoln's role as "savior of the Union" since in the period of four months covered, the impression is conveyed that the Civil War has been won in any case. Here, I object to Roger Ebert's view that the focus is also on Lincoln considering "the thirteenth amendment a masterstroke in cutting away the financial foundations of the Confederacy" and rather agree with Chris Tookey who criticizes the absence of these "strategic advantages of ruining the slave-based southern economy". The execution of the president's plan of pushing through the amendment at all costs, including debatable measures such as bribery, legal dodges, and simple lies, are potentially excused by the greater good of freedom for all and the principle that the end justifies the means—or "necessity of unholy political means to obtain holy political ends" as Allen Guelzo puts it (in Frum)—thereby not functioning as demystifying aspects. Coming back to Steven Spielberg's aforementioned quote of not wanting to install a monument but show Lincoln's working progress, I agree that he achieved a depiction Lincoln as a president who seized different opportunities to free the slaves step by step: Firstly, Lincoln emancipates them as a military means (mentioned in the introductory scene as commander-in-chief and during his explanation about the Emancipation Proclamation in the first cabinet meeting). Since its legality is at least in doubt, Lincoln wants to accelerate the process. Also, it is shown that he can neither depend on the people<sup>128</sup> nor on the approval of the House of Representatives after peace, so he grasps the opportunity and decides to put out all the stops. Initially not being involved personally, the president later takes over full action and responsibility and always seems to adjust to the altering circumstances<sup>129</sup>. Also, the fact that the script lets Lincoln mention the vote for Negroes

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<sup>128</sup> As aforementioned scene with Mr. and Mrs. Jolly reveals

<sup>129</sup> Finally lying and risking impeachment

towards the end of the movie supports my thought that his represented political view is that he might have wanted more but that the circumstances simply did not allow it.

The motion picture does serve as an ovation to the president and his achievement, a monument so to say. And as displayed, the depiction of Abraham Lincoln in this film offers various potential functions, among them serving as a role model for today's leaders<sup>130</sup> in his way of administering<sup>131</sup>. As outlined, the movie does not critically discuss the means Lincoln chooses. Furthermore, using rhetorical skills to convince opponents, allowing other opinions while building up one's own, and taking a risk in the fight for ideals such as freedom and justice but at the same time allowing compromises, complete the leadership qualities. Furthermore, Lincoln's forgiving and father-like attitude towards the South after its surrender drives at the noble example of a caring and fair character. Lincoln's overcoming of inner sorrows and family issues only reinforce the positive portrayal and support the worshipping characterization of the president, chiefly as a skilled political leader, an emancipator, and a liberator. It might also serve as an "appetizer" that awakes people's interest in getting more information about Lincoln's life.

### The Great Emancipator

Animated Series, *Futurama*, "Robot Lincoln"

"Robot Lincoln" is likely to be a reference to Abraham Lincoln's role as an emancipator since the robot version "contributed to the end of Mom's Friendly Robot Company's production and use of robot slaves" ("Robot Lincoln"). He is referred to by the character Nibbler when the latter explains the occurrence of robot slavery in former times as "back in the days before Robot Lincoln". With this allusion, I argue, *Futurama* memorializes the historical figure Lincoln and honors the United States' sixteenth president by repeating an act of emancipation in a different context to a Lincoln-figure. Since robots make up a big part of the show's cast, imaging them as slaves and inferior citizens seems disconcerting to the regular viewer.

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<sup>130</sup> Supported by production designer Rick Carter who states in extras "Having collaborated with Steven [Spielberg] over quite a few years now, I would say that this movie represents an engagement with not only US history but perhaps in the present tense as to how a leader actually has to function in order to lead, even when he has great obstacles."

<sup>131</sup> "Lincoln's steadiness, his willingness to compromise while maintaining principles, his believable self-deprecation and wit would endear him to Americans aching for those qualities in their leadership" (Raasch).

## The Liberator

Animated Series, *The Simpsons*, “The Color Yellow”

“The Color Yellow” is episode thirteen of season twenty-one and aired for the first time on February 21, 2010. Its story is about Lisa and her school research project on a family tree of the Simpsons. In the course of this, she finds the diary of Eliza Simpsons, a same-aged girl who was part of the Underground Railroad and tried to help slave Virgil escape to Canada in the 1860s. Several flashbacks show life of the Simpsons’ forebears in Springfield and their fleeing. In the arguable climax of the episode, Eliza’s mom Mabel and Virgil are on the brink of being busted when Abraham Lincoln appears and offers his hat to secure their disguise, contributing to their successful escape to Canada (see appendix, fig. 17).

Abraham Lincoln: May I be of assistance?

Mabel: Abraham Lincoln?!

Abraham Lincoln: Perhaps this hat will help disguise your hair.

Mabel: Thank you. How's it look?

Abraham Lincoln: It makes you look like a potbellied stove. Hey, hey, Honest Abe.  
(laughs) Oh, I'm a riot.

Lincoln is portrayed in a very gentle and helpful way, speaking in a clear and friendly voice. Presumable to ensure historical accuracy, the president is portrayed without a beard. Furthermore, he does not have his typical black combination but a red bow-tie that matches his vest under a blue suite. Maybe this is why Mabel addresses him by name to make sure that all of the viewers understand who the helping person is. Abraham Lincoln helps to ensure freedom for both slave and helper by giving them his trademark hat. Also, a reference to his honesty is made by letting him respond honestly to Mabel’s question on how she looked (compare to Geico Commercial). At the time the story takes place, Lincoln was not President yet and this might also contribute to his differing, pre-statesmanlike illustration. This factor helps depict Lincoln as a politician who had always fought for freedom of the slaves and move him away from accusations that he only attracted interest in this matter as a part of war strategy. Having the president-to-be’s appearance end with a self-doubting, self-accusation of being a riot, even this might appear far-fetched at first glimpse, offers at least the opportunity

of reading something more on his character. Since the yellow-skinned version of the former President is depicted as turning from humorously laughing to a self-reflecting person within only a second, I see an inclusion of a part of a manifold discussion about his pensive and self-questioning character (Mansch 29).

#### Savior of the Union

##### TV Series, *Drunk History*, “Episode 5”

Jen Kirkman’s drunk elaboration on Lincoln’s friendship with the black abolitionist Frederick Douglass is a positive narration as it highlights the president’s relationship to a black abolitionist at times of slavery and racial segregation. Will Ferrell impersonates Lincoln in black tie and with a stovepipe hat, but his beard is so obviously fake that the humorous character of the show becomes explicit at the very beginning (see appendix, fig. 18.). This amusing setting, an intoxicated narrator and some funny acting, arguably fits to Lincoln’s often described sense of humor (Thomas 1981, Krull et al.). Among the issues Kirkman mentions are that Abraham Lincoln was introduced to Douglass by a senator; that the President consulted Douglass on the issue of slavery, and was advised to let blacks fight in the war, give them equal pay, and let prisoners of war live. Furthermore, Kirkman states that the head of state considered these assumptions but emphasizes his priority is on “preserving the Union”. The audience is also told that Lincoln and Douglass became friends and that the latter remained the President’s advisor for years. She also mentions that after Abraham Lincoln’s death, Douglass gave a speech on the occasion of the unveiling of the Lincoln Emancipation Memorial. The abolitionist is cited as describing his friend as “a white man’s president” and that they had different views on slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the war. However, Douglass (impersonated by Don Cheadle) pays his tribute to his companion by stating: “He [Lincoln] is a great guy and I respect him because he listened even if he knew he could not fulfill my wishes he brought me in and he fucking listened. Nobody does that.”

One general purpose of placing Abraham Lincoln in the series “Drunk History” is to let the common viewer know something they have not been told before. Moreover, his involvement in the show is utilized to make history entertaining and enjoyable since he is a famous person of American history that does not need any prepping or introduction for the audience. This



seems true for all of his appearances as it fits the general idea of the series. Other than that, and this leads me to this particular episode, the sixteenth President is portrayed in an ambiguous tone and, consequently, offers further options of being functionalized. However, since the depiction starts and ends with positive approaches, I claim this to be the main focus. He is portrayed as open-minded since he is befriended with a black abolitionist. Also, Lincoln is described as a fair and listening person. But in the middle part of the sketch, the audience is also confronted with some gloomy aspects. According to Kirkham's story, Lincoln unmistakably put the preservation of the Union first and above all. She is also eager to mention that Douglass called him "a white men's president". This puts the President's policy on blacks and slaves into perspective as she continues and hits at the non-equal payment of black soldiers in the Civil War as well as indirectly claims that the President behaved inhumanly against prisoners of war.

Although this comic format is non-scripted and lives on an inebriated person's subjective storytelling, it is entitled to be historically correct. On this understanding, the audience might expect that the actors might exaggerate and interpret, as they might leave out important facts due to their mental status or personal preference, but still they are capable of "getting something" out of it. As outlined, I see the prevailing view on Lincoln as a resolved commander who is open to asking for advice and takes all measures to achieve his goal and save of the Union.

### Savior of the Union

Movie, *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (Scene 2 of 3)

Whereas Lincoln's first appearance in the movie will also be assigned a eulogizing role as "Honest Abe", the president returns fifteen minutes later into the movie, when Daley is surrounded by all the villains and his miniature cowboy friend is held captive in an hourglass. In this sheer desperate situation, miniature Octavius is accompanied by the giant Lincoln, who this time confirms his reputation as a savior and liberator by helping to rout out the ancient army of the undead. The president's demeanor, however, is still depicted as friendly—even in times of fighting. When Lincoln steps into the exhibition room, he does not simply attack the villains, but addresses them in a rather friendly manner ("You, sir, are in a heap of trouble").

When the president is attacked, he is ready for a counterpunch—in an act of self-defense, so to say. But even now Lincoln does not forcibly attack and destroy the villains but makes use of his force very limitedly—just enough to put them to rout—and while doing this he even wishes his fleeing opponents farewell. Thereby he is depicted showing humanness, respect towards his opponents, and tactical skills. When the president considers his work done and is about to leave the scene, he still finds time to hand out another piece of advice to Daley and refers to a former speech of his: “Just remember, son, a house divided against itself cannot stand.”—“ giving Larry a strategic hint for overcoming the villains<sup>132</sup>. Whereas Lincoln’s first appearance in the movie indicated his unifying talents, the second appearance, however, is fully shaped by his ability to fight for bringing peace. Neilson even describes him intervening the battle “in the guise of *deus ex machina*”.

#### Savior of the Union + Honest Abe

##### Movie, *A Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (Scene 1 of 3)

As outlined, the live Lincoln statue has three appearances throughout the storyline, the first of which I classify as eulogizing the former president. Lincoln’s entrance in the movie is characterized by a humorous yet venerable atmosphere and the viewer is exposed to a variety of references and clichés about the sixteenth president. The establishing shot shows how big the Memorial is as it starts with a view from the bottom of the stairs upwards and then turns to an angle from above Lincoln’s shoulders, looking down at the comparatively diminutive human character. To my view, these shots set the tone for something admirable coming up. The funny ambience is composed right from the start with Lincoln’s rather clumsy depiction after waking up from a seemingly long sleep. Complaining about the cooing pigeons, he hauls himself out of the armchair in order to check the state of his “great union”. As the giant stature unthinkingly approaches the rim of the memorial, Daley, in panic, tries to convince him to step back and potentially causes a laugh among the audience. Furthermore, Lincoln is depicted as a very friendly and gentle character. For example, he uses a kind form of address towards Daley (“sir”, “if I may”, “I’m afraid”), repetitively gives thanks, and expresses his

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<sup>132</sup> Daley is later able to drive a wedge between the various villains, thereby paving his way for his later success on the basis of Lincoln’s tip to “divide the house”.

delight in helping the threatened duo more than once (“you are welcome”), and also lifts Daley up to be able to look him in the eyes while talking to him (see appendix, figure 1). Moreover, Lincoln does not seem to grow tired of handing out advice (“I always say, leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today”) and since he address Daley with “son”, the tips get a fatherly and thus even more caring touch. Also, this consulting depiction is linked with a unifying character, since Lincoln tells Daley and Earheart more than once that they make “an adorable couple”. Speaking of the aviation pioneer, her clear commands meet with Lincoln approval, admitting that he favors her “can-do attitude” and does not seem to be upset by a strong woman giving him orders (“Put that little man down”, “Abraham, freeze!”). Along with the already mentioned representations come two references to the motif of “Honest Abe”. On that point, Lincoln excuses himself twice for freely expressing his maybe too sincere opinion and argues that “he must be honest”—referring to Daley’s height on the one hand and calling the couple “adorable” on the other hand. Another reference about Lincoln that is picked up in this two-minute scene is the one of a storyteller. As the president returns to his marble chair, he initiates a story (“Interesting story. One night in Gettysburg”) but is interrupted by the arrival of the ancient army. In this context, I agree with Neilson who claims that “reverence for Civil War President is simultaneously parodied and reinforced” (Neilson 114). Lincoln’s first appearance is designed to set his character, which includes honesty, refuge, friendliness, unifying talents—and all these attributes are displayed worth striving for.

### Honest Abe

#### TV Advertisement, *Geico*

*Geico* makes use of the “Honest Abe” image. It illustrates that the president’s nickname is justified by putting him in a situation that today’s viewers can easily identify with, a “tiny slice of real life, of reality” (Dewey) or, as the Arlington Cardinal puts it in other words, a “‘re-enactment’ of the age-old dangerous question from a woman to her man: ‘Do I look fat?’” (“Geico”). In terms of marketing strategy, Geico’s approach of using humorous and “lighthearted” (Romper20) ads to enter the world of social media seems successful. The company runs its own YouTube channel (GEICO) and many commercials have gone viral as “people love sharing day-related ads like Geico’s . . . Commercial” (Lieshout). This might

have contributed in Geico taking over the lead in the highly-competitive (auto) insurance market (S. Davis).

In terms of Lincoln, the distribution of the video on the Internet has led to several discussions, both on Lincoln's appearance and if "honesty is always best policy". Lincoln is neatly dressed, holding his stovepipe hat in his hands. He tries to be gentle to his wife, obviously searching for the right words, hesitating. Eventually, honesty seems to stand above all. In this example, the day-relation appears in the ubiquitous problem of giving opinions to a partner, so the viewer potentially feels with Honest Abe. I do not conform to the angry-white-dude (AWD) blog that claims that "Geico portrays President Lincoln as some wussified, scared of his shadow" person. I interpret Honest Abe's depiction in a more positive light and join historian Julie Ellen who praises Lincoln for not having "joined the ranks of modern day politicians who lie with ease". Also, I agree with documentarian Arun Chaudhary who states that this "would've made a great campaign ad for Lincoln if it had been produced in 1859" (35). The fact that the President is referred to as "Abe" makes me think that he should be placed close to the people, displayed as a man of the people and might encourage them to go for the honest way next time a similar situation occurs. I feel confirmed because this ad received a lot of positive replies on various platforms (Elliott, Cotharn).

In sum, Lincoln is displayed as "Honest Abe" in an entertaining way, proving that the former President deserves this positively attributed nickname. Also, he serves as a potential role-model for today's men and politicians. Furthermore, Honest Abe helped the company Geico to reach a wide audience since he was at least one of the factors why this ad has been spread all over the Internet and contributed to the company's success on the auto insurance market.

### Man of the People

#### TV Advertisement, *Diet Mountain Dew*

In this advertisement, the world-wide known brand PepsiCo. makes use of Lincoln and his popularity. By using an arguably not well-known fact about the former president, they intensify the possible impact of the commercial. First, I assume that it is rather safe to say that the surprising meltdown of the former president makes most viewers laugh or at least chuckle,

which would have a positive effect on the product. Second, and this is backed up by a lot of different discussions on the Internet, people talk about the ad. Not necessarily about the product itself but at least it is asked if the claim that Lincoln's favorite sports was wrestling is really true (Adair)—and talking about an ad is arguably a good sign in terms of marketing (Dichter about "Word-of-mouth" concept). Certainly, Lincoln's kind of wrestling in the 19<sup>th</sup> century differs from the WWE-style that is performed in the Mountain Dew ad<sup>133</sup>, but this only shows that the clip serves for entertainment purposes as well. Focusing on Lincoln's character itself, the humorous potential of the clip lies especially in the president's wrestling actions and it is arguably funny to imagine what would have happened to history if he had not focused on his eloquence and power of words but solely on his wrestling skills. The President's morphing into a wrestler was too offensive to some viewers, but, as stated, that is what commercials want—that the product is being talked about. In this case, the website smilepolitely.com announced in comment, be it satirical or not, that the University of Illinois made "Wrastlin' Abe" their new mascot (Schreiber), spinning the cultural wheel of reutilizing. The ad also imparts some viewers with a new piece of information about Lincoln, i.e., he was a wrestler. Against this backdrop, I do not see any potential of mocking or ridiculing the historical figure Lincoln since the delivered facts are true and, thus, its exaggerated execution just serves as a marketing gag. On the contrary, by highlighting Lincoln's physical skills and showing how he puts his foot down and talks straight makes him a man of the people. Furthermore, the ad serves as a reminder of him winning the Lincoln-Douglas-debates, thereby highlighting one of his political achievements. Also, the president's rhetorical skills are underscored as well. As he interacts with the audience ("would the good people like a reply"), Lincoln is entertaining his crowd and praised by approving applause.

### Man of the People

#### TV Advertisement, *Rozerem*

The "quirky" (Petrecca) and controversial ad for *Rozerem* offers room for interpretation as the ongoing debate among the public indicates. Above all, Lincoln is used as a popular and

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<sup>133</sup> Geier, comments section.

established figure to help place a new product on the market.<sup>134</sup> However, I claim that the depiction of Abraham Lincoln in this commercial serves the main function of installing him as a man of the people. Lincoln and the talking beaver are representatives of the world of dreams, as the first has been dead for almost one and a half centuries and the latter is not known for being capable of talking English. The fact that the sleepless man normally dreams of the sixteenth president potentially leads to positive thinking towards Lincoln. Displaying the former statesman as a caring father-figure even intensifies this impression. Additionally, in a more explicit view, especially the president's self-reference as "Honest Abe" leads me to the conclusion that he is the potential epitome of a truthful bearer of the advertising message. In this context, as the last 30 seconds—which makes up the half of the whole commercial—are used to call attention to the potential side effects and to highlight that there is no danger of becoming addicted, a reliable and thoroughly honest promoter is of highest importance. Also, Lincoln might serve as an expert in the field of sleep disorder because it has been claimed that the president actually suffered from insomnia (Holzer 2008, 59). Having the president admitting that "it happens to a lot of people", places him right in the middle of society. Lincoln is depicted as a very kind and peaceful person. He addresses the sleepless man directly and calms him down, as mentioned above, using a modern language register ("it's cool"). This lets me infer that Lincoln's positive features and the carried meaning of "better times" shall be transferred to modern days. Whereas it is not my purpose to examine the other characters, I would nevertheless like to link Lincoln to the chess game. Certainly, one could argue that it is the man's dream so that the chess game rather lets me read into the sleepless man's character. Abraham Lincoln seems nevertheless ready to play and, thus, I derive from this ability another feature that lets him shine.

Taken all together, the sixteenth president occupies several functions in the Rozerem advertising campaign "Your Dreams Miss You". Beyond the regular use of his historical popularity, he is contingently involved as a representative of a dream world, representing the common man with a high expertise and thorough honesty.

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<sup>134</sup> "To explain the odd juxtaposition of Lincoln with a talking beaver, Benecchi says that in focus groups, the president scored higher than any other character, including Shakespeare and Lady Liberty." (Fawcett)

## Special Position: Savior of the Union and Fighting New Enemies

### Movie, *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*

The movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* takes up a special position. As previously mentioned, it serves two levels. Whereas the first clearly alludes to the fictional world of fighting vampires, which I categorize as a re-invention of Lincoln, the second alludes to his actual biography and actual political achievements, thereby illustrating glorifying aspects. However, both storylines are so complexly intertwined that a clear-cut separation was hardly possible. Thus, I decided to place the analysis here at the end of chapter 4.1 (on Glorified Lincoln), right before 4.2 (on Re-Invented Lincoln) as it equally contains elements of both.

In *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, the audience faces a positively represented President. He is depicted in a prevailing glorifying way when it comes to illustrating his character traits and political achievements. Furthermore, the fact that he is fighting the threat of vampires enriches the storyline, adding a function to the purpose of his acting by re-inventing Lincoln's actions on a fictional level. I will outline various examples of eulogizing the historic figure Lincoln through this fictional story, such as his representation as an honest character, the given image of the hardworking rail-splitter, or the picture of the eloquent politician who eventually emancipates the slaves. As I aim to show, some arguably negative depictions not even necessarily demystify his favorable image but could also be regarded as a means to overcome a negative effect. However, I do not consider the main task of this analysis to investigate the various representations of Lincoln's character from *within* the movie, but rather from the "outside" in order to draw inferences in regard to the potential functionalization of his character. From this, I will be able to draw conclusions about what the historical figure Lincoln is made use of and what it (potentially) tells us about the president's image today.

The opening scene lays the groundwork of Lincoln's overall representation in this motion picture and serves as a good summary of the manifold aspects that emerge throughout the development of the storyline. While the viewer is *tracing* a panorama shot of modern Washington D.C. that is slowly changing into a depiction of the capital in the year 1865, Lincoln is quoting a diary entry in his own voice-over. Almost the same quotation is used towards the end of the movie as well, making it encircle the storyline and thereby amplifying both its impact and importance:

History prefers legends to men. It prefers nobility to brutality. Soaring speeches to quiet deeds. History remembers the battle and forgets the blood. Whatever history remembers of me, if it remembers anything at all, it shall only be a fraction of the truth. For whatever else I am, a husband, a lawyer, a president, I shall always think of myself as a man who struggled against darkness.

With the help of this (fictional) quote, a reference to what Lincoln is correlated with today is already presented within the first minutes of the movie: a self-description of a noble legend, an eloquent speaker who fought and won a war against injustice. Moreover, various established approaches to Lincoln are displayed: Abraham Lincoln as a husband, a lawyer, and a politician. I derive that the character Lincoln presumes he would be remembered for these first mentioned attributes only and was therefore keeping a diary to share his secrets. However, as I will point out, the Lincoln figures in *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* are also all of the conversing virtues: a normal man, a brutal fighter and commander-in-chief, and a man who acts and accepts that blood is to be spilled.

The whole quote itself comes across very humbly and leads me to attribute this humbleness to Lincoln's character because I refer to a quote of himself, about himself and, at the same time, spoken by him. At least two direct self-references exist underlining the modest predicate. First, the expressed uncertainty of what will be remembered finds its peak in the quote "if [history] remembers anything at all". The Lincoln character suggests in a very unpretentious way that he is not even sure if he will be remembered at all, despite his undoubted and proven historical achievements. Second, by describing himself as "a man who struggled against darkness", he emphasizes two points, both supporting humbleness, and the recipient can draw conclusions how Lincoln sees himself. For one thing, labelling himself a "man", thereby making use of the earlier mentioned contrastive pair of "man vs. legend", he distances himself from the latter. Furthermore, with the use of the term "struggling", he decides to accentuate an action, his active fight, in this context "quite deeds" over "soaring speeches". Hence, for a second time, he prefers the contrary aspect of what would help him get down in history. For him, it seems to be of minor importance to be remembered as a husband, lawyer, or simply president, but as a common man of action. Moreover, the aforementioned reference to "struggling against darkness" brings an element of ambiguity into play. Darkness, on the one hand, can be considered what was already graspable in connection to Abraham Lincoln as a historic figure: being associated with alcoholism, his life



with a wife in charge, the strokes of fate he had to cope with, e.g., the early loss of both his parents or the death of his son as a child. But, on the other side, in the context of this film, “darkness” refers to the embedded fictional element of vampire hunting and, therefore, makes the character and its weak traits human. Consequently, this offers the option of excusing brutal actions since his heroic acts outshine the disputatious ones, even more when happening for a greater cause or on his struggling way to find himself or the right thing to do.

The discussed attributes give prospects into the representation of Abraham Lincoln in this movie as they recur throughout the development of the storyline. Additionally, I intend to point out other aspects, elaborate on them and offer a subsequent analysis with special consideration of potential functions of those representations, be they glorifying, demystifying, or intermediate steps.

### *Making a Hero*

I mainly refer to the figure of Abraham Lincoln in this movie as a hero because of its construction that openly aims at elevating the historical person Lincoln to heroic stature from today’s point of view, not so much because he is the protagonist of the plot. After outlining the heroic traits and characteristics, I will then subcategorize its functions into imparting values, embodying patriotism, but also showing humaneness, which brings Lincoln closer to the common people.

Appealing to the popular quality of this motion picture, the Lincoln character is equipped with stereotypical superhero traits. Most striking might be the notion of Lincoln’s *secret life* as a vampire hunter. For the longest part of the plot, only a few people are involved and get to know about his nightly activities. This feature is closely connected to, for example, Superman, Batman, or Spiderman, who all have a secret identity. Another analogy to the superhero motif is that Lincoln comes from “lower than Peter Parker”, as screenwriter Seth states in the audio comments. Fate strikes Lincoln some dreadful blows, e.g., in accordance with aforementioned superheroes, he loses both parents quite early in his life<sup>135</sup> and he has to overcome poverty. Also, Lincoln antagonizes a main villain, i.e., primal vampire Adam who presides over an army of the undead.

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<sup>135</sup> Superman does not lose them but is far away from them

In more general terms, Lincoln is shown as a person who is willing to make many sacrifices. Initially, he makes a pact and agrees to live without friends and to not start a family. He accepts to commit his whole life to the hunt of vampires.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, a considerable amount of time is spent on showing how Lincoln acquires and trains his fighting skills<sup>137</sup> and how he applies them in numerous battles with vampires, always putting his life at risk. The fact that the vampire hunter does not possess given superpowers but has to work hard to acquire them makes it arguably easier for the common people to identify with his character. Additionally, he moves to Springfield, IL, because of his “destiny” and starts from scratch. All in all, it seems reasonable to assume that Lincoln shall be depicted as a person who does not act for fame but to serve mankind, and a greater good.

I see more positive connotations that support the worship of Lincoln in this motion picture than the other way around and two reoccurring features seem to outshine others: his fighting skills and eloquence. The vampire fighter’s attitude throughout the plotline can be divided into three parts: Lincoln as a fighter, Lincoln as a speaker, and as a matured fighter again.

Right from the start of the motion picture, Lincoln is shown as a man of deeds and in terms of fighting and hunting vampires, he undergoes a change. In the beginning, he miserably fails at attacking Barts and is rescued by his mentor Henry Sturges<sup>138</sup>. But he practices hard to reach his goal of taking revenge for his murdered mother and is able to eliminate several vampires<sup>139</sup> with growing ease. Fights against a pharmacist, banker, and smith are explicitly shown and action-packed, several others are at least mentioned or implied. After having killed Barts in a spectacular fight, which takes almost four minutes of the movie, he is disappointed by Henry. At the same time, Lincoln has already been building his career as a politician and decides to turn in his axe and favors “pen over sword”.

Second, at the latest from 55 minutes into the movie, AL is portrayed as a very eloquent man and politician. The viewer is only exposed to a few of Lincoln’s political speeches, at least in regard of the total amount of time being used in this motion picture, his eloquence plays an important role nevertheless. The few examples used are very strong and partially utilize the viewer’s arguably existing background knowledge whenever necessary: his first

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<sup>136</sup> 00:11.45

<sup>137</sup> From 00:15.45 to 00:18.15

<sup>138</sup> 00:08.45 to 00:11.15

<sup>139</sup> Pharmacist, banker, smith, etc.

political speech after his time in jail<sup>140</sup>, the Lincoln-Douglas Debate<sup>141</sup>, the presidential oath<sup>142</sup>, the Emancipation Proclamation<sup>143</sup>, and the Gettysburg Address<sup>144</sup>. The viewer only gets to see or hear fractions of each speech, but they are presented in a very valiant and statesmanlike way, always accompanied by applause or at least approval from the audience as well as positive background music. However, during this episode, Lincoln has to face various throwbacks and problems, eventually ending in the Civil War and the death of thousands of soldiers. This is when he decides to make use of his old strength again, i.e., fighting.

Third, the ultimate and action-packed showdown on the train shows Lincoln as a fighter again. Finally, Lincoln ultimately wins over the antagonist and kills him. Even though it is a fight to the death, the ultimate clash could also be seen as part of Lincoln's "quiet deeds" since the train track is abandoned and nobody really notices. Also, several positive character traits are taken up, thereby combining some virtues that are to be discussed later on in this chapter. For example, Lincoln acts like a commander-in-chief by using a clever tactic. He lets Adam think he is going to be betrayed by Speed, but actually Speed and Lincoln work closely together so that the president is very well aware of and able to defeat the vampires attacking the train. Also, he is capable of executing his acquired fighting skills against numerous enemies, to the point of combating several vampires at the same time. The main character's fighting abilities seem to be growing stronger in accordance with the importance of causes he is fighting for.

The fact that way more time is spent on showing Lincoln's qualities as a fighter than on those of a speaker might be due to several reasons. On the one hand, the fighting and hunting is the center of the plotline and new to the viewer. It helps to develop the story of the main character and, furthermore, it can be assumed that even watchers who are not too familiar with Lincoln credit him with eloquence. The film has pointed out that neither fighting nor words alone are productive and successful enough to fight the enemy. Both qualities combined enrich his spectrum of weapons and should communicate the viewer that it is not "either or" but that both finally lead to success. This is in concordance with the opening and

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<sup>140</sup> Roughly 20 seconds from 00:37.29 (still in the time as a fighter but used to give a hint on his upcoming career)

<sup>141</sup> Roughly 30 seconds from 01:00.40

<sup>142</sup> Roughly 10 seconds from 01:02.45

<sup>143</sup> Roughly 20 seconds (including signing the Emancipation Proclamation) from 01:04.50

<sup>144</sup> Roughly 60 seconds from 01:34.22

closing lines respectively, when Lincoln speaks about the two sides of the coin—even though one part might be remembered and the other part might remain unseen by the public eye.

After having set Lincoln as the described positive, heroic character—someone the audience can conceivably identify with—he, according to my argumentation, holds now the potential function of conveying a certain set of values<sup>145</sup> to the viewer. So to say, he serves as a role model and offers the audience something to take or draw from this motion picture on a personal level. Most certainly, this list of virtues can never claim to be complete but I intend to present and analyze the most obvious observations: courage, honesty and trustworthiness, diligence and hard work, bond with family, prudence, justice, temperance, and patriotism. Some of them are introduced very early in the story and seem inherent; others are brought to Lincoln by other characters as he undergoes a development or change respectively to possess these.

First and foremost, Lincoln's sense of justice is a fundamental component of the storyline. It is introduced very early in the film and emerges in several scenes. In the very beginning, a young Lincoln witnesses injustice when his colored friend is tortured by the slave owner. Not only does Lincoln realize that his friend is abused but he decides to act and not look away—as his father tells him—not caring that he is only a small boy with hardly any chance of beating an adult<sup>146</sup>. A second example is his first encounter with Stephen Douglas in Speed's shop. Although Lincoln is only a shop assistant meeting a rather famous politician for the first time, Lincoln stands up to Douglas when the topic of slavery comes up. Again, the protagonist stands in and acts by expressing his conviction.

Lincoln's sense of justice and his readiness to take action is closely connected to him and set up very early in the movie and he is often depicted as a very courageous character as well. In addition to the already mentioned examples of standing by his beliefs, he acts bravely many times. For example, Lincoln is trying to rescue a woman when he hears screams in

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<sup>145</sup> Here, "virtue" is used in the common sense of "a morally good behavior" (Merriam Webster) and I aim to connect it to a potential function of Lincoln, i.e. to transport those values to the viewer of the movie. This general working definition allows me to add generally accepted ideas that go beyond and enrich classical distinctions as the approaches from the natural side, e.g. Aristotle or Plato, or the theological side, e.g., St. Paul in Christian believe. This would simply go beyond the scope of this thesis and is not critically relevant.

<sup>146</sup> 02:25

Henry's House<sup>147</sup>. He does so after waking up without knowing where he is, being confused and disoriented, which even reinforces my impression of a brave character. Also, Lincoln helps Will when he is under attack by bounty hunters. Eventually, this gets the old friends into jail, emphasizing Lincoln's courageous willingness to act and stand for his beliefs, no matter the consequences. Above all, the main storyline with Lincoln fighting vampires is a brave act itself. A normal human being without any super powers fighting an overly powerful enemy is considerably the most valiant example. This rather unpromising battle with its numerous fighting scenes, in which Lincoln narrowly escapes death quite often, underlines the importance of him being shown as an outstandingly courageous person and, thus, conveying the importance of the virtue "courage".

Third, it is through Lincoln's actions that the audience might conclude that hard work pays off. Right from the very start of the motion picture, Lincoln acts a diligent worker. Even as a child he supports his family and carries a job at a plantation. After going through a short period of emotional and physical weakness after his father's death—he drinks and fails miserably at an attempt to kill the slave owner—he gets himself under control again and dedicatedly focuses on avenging the death of his mother with the help of Henry Sturges. Besides his hard and painful way of acquiring fighting skills with his axe, he works in a shop and studies law. Later on, he fights vampires during the nighttime in addition to his studies and labor and seems to be on duty day and night.

Furthermore, the viewer can conclude from various scenes that Abraham Lincoln is an honest, reliable, and trustworthy person that is willing to make several sacrifices. Thereby, he is closely in line with the general depiction of "Honest Abe". For instance, Lincoln's father asks him to do "nothing foolish" when both visit the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, mother of the president-to-be. Although being filled with hatred and desire for revenge, he would keep his promise for the next nine years until his father eventually dies. Afterwards, even though Lincoln only seems interested in killing Jack Barts, he stands by his promise to his mentor Henry to withhold his personal interest and fight all vampires instead of killing his ultimate goal, until Henry would tell him it was time. Abraham Lincoln makes this pact and sticks to it, even if he might not concur with it at all times. One thing he is taught rather early in the training process of hunting vampires is that "power comes from truth". When being

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<sup>147</sup> 11:20

asked to chop down a tree with his axe, Lincoln's first attempts are rather miserably and weak. Henry then provokes Lincoln and forces him to be truthful about himself and his own feelings, Lincoln hits the tree as if unleashed and relieved, chopping it down with one strike. This is maybe the most striking example showing that sticking to the truth and being honest with oneself without any restrictions leads to success eventually. Another example for Lincoln's honesty is that he tells Mary the truth about his secret life while their picnic at the riverside after Mary asks him why he was so tired. Even though Mary does not believe him and laughs about it, this scene shows that Lincoln does not want to lie about it.

Another trait that I connect to Lincoln's depiction is his propensity to temperance, at least to some extent. Right from the very start, Lincoln is presented as a person of modest circumstances; he works as a child, lives in an old log cabin. When he attends a ball for the first time, he is clearly uncomfortable in his borrowed suit. He leaves for Springfield with no money in his pockets. Also, as a person, Lincoln acts modest and tempered: although having started to develop feelings for Mary, he decides to not answer her kiss in front of her porch, thereby keeping his promise to Henry, exercising restraint, and making a huge sacrifice. After taking personal revenge on Barts, Lincoln undergoes a transition and focuses on a greater political cause. He intensifies his interest in politics, using the people and legislation to help in the fight against the dark side. Again, the protagonist puts back his interests to serve the general public and a greater cause. This time, however, his desire to raise a family wins through. Here, I argue that a connection between two fatherhoods is established. Firstly, his role as a father of his son and secondly, according to the meaning of his biblical name, which is presented as "father of many nations" at an early stage in the movie. Both paternities are at risk. Lincoln is aware of the danger of founding a family since Sturges has warned him multiple times before and hindered him from founding a family for a long time. Furthermore, as a president and commander-in-chief, "his" nation is at risk, too. The nation is divided and I argue that Lincoln takes over the role of the nation's father and does everything necessary to reunite the family, i.e., the American people. After the loss of his biological son, Lincoln is not willing to lose his other "children". Certainly, his act of founding a family against the warnings could be called selfish, but I reason that having children nevertheless makes him just more human and approachable and underlines his thinking of the greater good. Also, the motif of family is highlighted by hinting at a popular scene with President John F. Kennedy and his son in the oval office when Lincoln's son is shown playing with plastic soldiers at the same

place some decades before the “original” scene would be taking place. The motif of serving a greater cause is reflected in his relentless ambition to save and reuniting the divided nation.

The aforementioned quote could also serve as a biblical reference and connects the presidential character with religion. The full quote “Your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations” is from Genesis, chapter 17, verse five. Whereas the biblical story tells that Abraham is given the fruitful land of Canaan, mirroring the biblical image on President Lincoln would mean that he takes care of a God-given country and that his actions might therefore be blessed and divine.

Moreover, the entire storyline shows various examples of displaying Abraham Lincoln as a character that is equipped with traits of prudence, smartness, and cleverness. However, this is only becomes more and more obvious within the second half of the film as Lincoln develops from an impulsively acting, selfish young man seeking for personal revenge, to the eventual prudent savior of the union. Whereas his first attempts at fighting injustice fail desolately, he contrives a plan and is prepared to work, learn, and acquire needed skills to accomplish his end. One idea that comes up again and again is that of a contingency plan. Also, Abraham Lincoln’s change of tactics, from axe to pen to the above-mentioned combination of both, is a possible sign of development and cleverness as he learns from his failures. His ultimate idea of using silver to fight the army of vampires and setting up a trap by misleading the vampires with the help of his friends eventually makes him the savior of the nation.

Although the filmmakers do not spend too much time on Lincoln’s political speeches, the president’s eloquence is noticeable in the course of the motion picture and accompanies the viewer from its start to the very ending. On his mother’s deathbed he reads a self-penned poem, after his time in jail Senator Noland congratulates him on his speech on the street of Springfield, the viewer witnesses fractions of the Lincoln-Douglas debates as well as his famous speech at Gettysburg. In his orations, the issue of freedom plays a more and more important role over the course of time. This idea is introduced very early in the movie as Lincoln’s mother teaches her young son Abraham that “until all men are free, we are all slaves”. Again, Lincoln experiences a development over the course of time as he discovers the idea of freedom in a political sense after his time in jail. The pursuit of freedom and equality for the whole nation then makes up the main goals of his tenure and reaches its summit in a very personal and sole decision, i.e., the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln

does so in opposition to his mentor Henry, who disapproves because he fears the spread of vampires to the North. But Lincoln clearly counters that it is not up to them to decide who shall be free and who not. Also, he decides solely to send more and more troops to the battlefields, even though his close advisors suggest not doing this. According to my understanding, this underlines Lincoln's strong will and once again suggests the audience that one should stick to one's ideals and ideas.

The combination of the above-mentioned superhero traits and virtues portray Lincoln as a patriotic president and commander-in-chief. His two most important goals are to abolish slavery and to save the union, alluding to Lincoln's historic image as Emancipator and Savior of the Union. Though his fight against the injustice of slavery is set very early in the motion picture, the threat of a separating Confederate nation evolves in the course of events and leads the viewer to the climax of the storyline. Thus, I argue that from a personal search for revenge, a firm will to save and serve the whole country arises. Despite personal setbacks and many casualties on the battlefields, he always keeps the greater cause in mind, the future of his nation standing above all. Many people around him ask him to stop sending troops, but he persists in his opinion and is willing to fight until the end—personally and with his troops. Thus, I see him depicted as an emancipator, in a multiple sense. Not only does he emancipate the slaves and gives them freedom, he also emancipates the country from the threat of vampires, thereby, as the viewer could infer, paving the way for today's liberal America.

As announced, I am not neglecting demystifying components that I found as being part of the film. Altogether, I argue, however, that they only make up a minor part and mainly serve to make the character Lincoln approachable, easier to identify with, and simply more human. I back this assertion by Lincoln's described development to the eventual emancipator and savior of the union; this is what is most likely to stay in the viewer's mind. Furthermore, most of rather negative connoted attributes and actions can be excused to some extent.

Most importantly, I link the majority of found negative aspects with Lincoln's younger days. His strong seek for revenge and his first attempt at doing so under the influence of alcohol could be legitimated in that his mother was killed before his eyes and that it is only natural to feel hatred towards the murderer of someone beloved. In several scenes, Lincoln comes across as an insecure person. For instance, Lincoln introduces himself to Speed and Mary Todd very shyly as he is not sure whether to only mention his first name or also his



surname. Additionally, he feels uncomfortable in the borrowed suit when attending a ball for the very first time in his life. However, I do not hold this insecurity against Lincoln but, on the contrary, underline his humbleness and the unfamiliar encounter and interaction with the upper class.

A more controversial issue, in my opinion, is the founding of his family against the early promise to Henry. I counter the possible accusation of selfishness by arguing that Lincoln has refrained from entering a close partnership with Mary Todd for a very long time and only changes his mind after being let down by Henry (finding out he is a vampire) and putting the axe away to pursue a political career. His behavior could be called naïve, but as naivety is rather characterized by innocence, I see Lincoln possibly underestimating his personal involvement in the vampire hunting. His wish for a family, in regard to the early loss of his own parents, seems defensible and, as argued before, in relation to his name (or destiny in a way) maybe even religiously initiated or designated. Other potentially demystifying examples are those where Lincoln is found in desperate situations, such as his time in jail or at the dining table after the death of his son, facing thousands and thousands of fallen soldiers and thinking about evacuating Washington. In these two despaired moments, Lincoln seeks help from Mary Todd. Yet, instead of valuing this as a sign of weakness, I argue this to be more a sign of strength: recognizing that asking for help is better than falling. He gathers strength from his family and friends. By the end of the motion picture, the relationship between the president and his wife can be described as harmonic since they leave for the theatre and Abraham asks Mary Todd where his hat is, and she knows and helps him find it. Also, the vampire hunting president feels unlimited trust in his friends, as he lets Speed fake a betrayal to set up a trap for the vampires on the train.

All in all, the positive attributes linked with Abraham Lincoln in the motion picture *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* clearly outweigh negative aspects to my mind and I claim the viewer will most likely associate Lincoln with positive attributes. Some topics, such as Lincoln's time as a rail splitter and practicing as a lawyer, remain virtually untouched; some topics, such as his role as a father and husband as well as his death, are only mentioned very briefly. Even though the movie risks simplifying the topic of slavery by putting it on a par with vampires and does not approach the origins of slavery (Hogan 2012), it enables elevating Lincoln as he is fighting two evils and makes him appear even more courageous. Thus,

Lincoln's character, equipped with self-acquired superhero traits and noble virtues, is easy to bond with and bears the potential of becoming a role model for the viewer since he saves the Union in a double sense as from both secession and vampires. When correlated to the story's time of origin (novel 2010, film 2012), I follow Hogan who stated that "[w]e find Lincoln battling all kinds of shadowy figures sort of bent on destroying us. Instead of terrorists and investment bankers in the real world, he's fighting vampires . . ." (Biancolli). There seems to have been a need for a powerful and punchy leadership figure. Lincoln is a good fit as he is put into a lightweight motion picture that probably aims at taking the viewers' minds off their day-to-day problems and relieving them from stress. Both Graham's statement on the initial idea of the storyline and the rising amount of superhero and fantasy movies<sup>148</sup> support this thought. I will keep these findings in mind when coming to other artifacts of this time. Since the making of this film is evidentially attributable to the events around the Bicentennial, I have the impression that the use of Lincoln could be Graham's personal homage to the Great Emancipator, transferred into a preferable and popular setting.

#### 4.2 The Re-Invented Lincoln: Abe in Modern Contexts – Role Model, Representative, and Fighting New Enemies

As previously detailed, the category of a "Re-Invented Lincoln" introduces depictions of the sixteenth president in new contexts, mostly detached from his historical setting. In this regard, he fights new enemies and threats; serves as a moral authority to comment on current debates, acts as a counselor and detractor in modern times, or as a spokesperson for various purposes, for instance, gay rights or the legalization of marijuana. Unlike the movie *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, the following (parts of) films, TV shows, commercials, animated series, Internet memes, and comics all clearly fit in this category.

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<sup>148</sup> For example: Iron Man 2 (2010), The Twilight Saga: Eclipse (2010), Thor (2011), The Green Hornet (2011), Captain America: The First Avenger (2011) X-Men: First Class (2011), The Avengers (2012), The Amazing Spiderman (2012), The Dark Knight Rises (2012),

## Fighting New Enemies

Animated Series, *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, “Mitefall”

Lincoln’s cameo runs separately from the main plot and occurs as a sort of introduction before the opening credits. The scene starts with the bearded president sitting up in a theater box laughing, claiming to his wife Mary Todd that “with that war between the states nonsense behind us, it feels good to laugh again.” John Wilkes Booth appears in the background, aiming with a gun from behind at the president’s back but Batman appears out of nowhere and prevents the immediate assassination. A fight between Batman and Booth erupts in comic style manner, with lots of action. When the “caped crusader” is able to throw the Southerner on stage, it seems the fight is over. But far from it, Booth transforms into a cyborg, equipped with powerful shooting weapons. Lincoln escapes the box carrying his wife around his shoulders. As Batman is in great danger, Abraham Lincoln gets an axe from an emergency device<sup>149</sup> and joins the fight (see appendix, fig. 19), eventually able to finish the villain by skillfully throwing his characteristic weapon right into Booth’s steam power valve. Lincoln and Batman thank each other, express their admiration and the DC character leaves through a portal for an alternate universe.

Not least because of fighting along with Batman, the comic version of Abraham Lincoln is portrayed in a super hero manner as well. The president is drawn very muscularly and manly, speaking in a rather low voice. He appears very strong as he carries his wife on his shoulders, smashing the cyborg version of Booth with his bare fist. Also, he is linked with his former days as a rail-splitter when he uses this characteristic weapon to destroy Booth with his own skills (“My railsplitting days are long gone, but I still know how to swing an axe”). Lincoln does not let his caped hero partner do the work, but even rescues him while the cyborg is about to crush Batman’s head (see picture above). Batman admires the president (“It was my honor to fight by your side, President Lincoln” and “Just a long time admirer”) and this raises Lincoln to a superhero level. When expressing gratitude to Batman, Lincoln is quoted that “reconstruction of our great union can now continue unabated”—explaining his main political task after the finished war. Hence, I derive an indirect criticism on the way the post-war reconstruction was handled and that Lincoln’s advertised leniency towards the South was not implemented after his death. Even though it has been explained that this series was not

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<sup>149</sup> “in case of emergency or confederate cyborg attack”

necessarily produced for a young audience only, this short clip—and the role of Lincoln implicitly—nevertheless potentially serves as to implement a super hero image of the sixteenth president in the kids' minds. This impression is reinforced because the scene was not embedded in the regular storyline but served as an introduction to the final episode of the whole series.

### Fighting New Enemies

#### Comic, *Time Lincoln*

In the comic *Time Lincoln*, the altered version of the sixteenth president is fighting all types of enemies, working as a superweapon against various threats. His visual appearance suggests that he is a strong and determined character with leadership ability. For one, this assumption is borne by the drawing style which is distinguished by sharp lines and an angular tendency—especially his face serves as a good example. He is depicted tall and broad-shouldered and his poses let him demonstrate his presumed power. Whereas Time Lincoln wears the President's trademark beard, he interestingly shifts between two different outfits—a casual and a combat one. When not on duty, he does not wear his typical hat and appears more stylish and colorful, dressed with a red tie and a blue vest under his suit. However, whenever Time Lincoln is in action, he draws on trusted outfit, i.e., his stovepipe hat, black bow tie, a more formal suit, and a long, majestic overcoat. Lincoln's metallic gloves, shoulder protection, and chest apparatus, are all evocative of a steampunk outfit—letting Lincoln shine both aesthetically and exalted.

The issue of *Time Lincoln vs. Cuba Commander* takes the time traveling president to 1962, the year of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Generally speaking, Time Lincoln fights the probably most infamous villains in history, at least from a U.S. point of view—among them Mao, Stalin, and Hitler. In this particular comic, Time Lincoln fights an evil triangle consisting of Fidel Castro, Mao Tse Tung, and Krushnov, all of whom are led and goaded by Void Stalin into attacking the United States of America. In the end, Time Lincoln and his team, Albert Einstein in particular, are able to prevent Stalin from firing nuclear missiles towards the US and other countries in order to take over the world.

The Lincoln character takes up a superior role with surreal abilities and uses them in an extraordinarily patriotic way to save the United States and mankind. Since all of the used historical patterns of hot spots were more or less solved, e.g. the Cuban Missile Crisis ended with the withdrawal of Soviet rockets and an installation of the Moscow-Washington hotline, I claim that the solving of the most popular tensions and problems of US History are virtually accredited to Time Lincoln and, as a consequence, arguably to the sixteenth president himself. *Time Lincoln vs Cuba Commander* serves as a good example of how the comic series' name giver tackles threats. The fact that he installs a team of intellectuals around him conveys that he does not think himself too good for not allowing any help on his projects. This might let the audience draw conclusion on historical Lincoln's political skills and the already mentioned integration of intellectuals into his cabinet<sup>150</sup>. However, Time Lincoln (as well as President Lincoln) still possesses the leading role and is clear head of team. As he gives tactical commands<sup>151</sup>, motivational words<sup>152</sup>, and interpersonal guidance to such highly distinguished persons as for instance Albert Einstein<sup>153</sup>, I describe Lincoln's depiction as magnificently outstanding and Über American. Another example of this superior role among the highbrows is that he is styled by "Sir", "Herr Lincoln", or "President Lincoln" whereas he himself addresses his fellows by their first names "Albert" or "Amelia". In the Cuban adventure's ultimate showdown, it is Time Lincoln who uses his eloquence to distract the communist leader and enables Albert Einstein to do his assigned work. Also, it is Lincoln's fist that knocks Castro down in order to avoid the launch of the missiles, in this way single-handedly saving freedom and democracy for the western world. All in all, Time Lincoln makes a brave American savior and superhero, thereby serving as a role model and presumably helping make the audience credit these traits to former President Abraham Lincoln.

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<sup>150</sup> See discussion of movie *Lincoln*

<sup>151</sup> "Everybody back to headquarters". "Transmit your disarming pulse as soon as possible".

<sup>152</sup> "Failure is not an option, everyone" or ""Trying is never a mistake, Albert. Not trying is always a mistake".

<sup>153</sup> Lincoln consoles Einstein when the scientist blames himself for the development of the atomic bomb:

"Albert, I saw the choices you had to make. The consequences for you were too great for any other decision."

Lincoln as a Moral Authority: Loyalty to the Constitution  
Movie, *The Conspirator*

In contrast to the movies *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* or *Lincoln*, the sixteenth president of the United States is not the main character in *The Conspirator*. He is assassinated after a few minutes into the movie and only appears a few times on screen. However, the whole plot is based on his death and aftermath and therefore offers various scenes with potential functions of his depiction in this motion picture. I claim that it is the main task of the Lincoln figure to serve as a moral instance that defends constitutional law, justice, and equity—not only shining on the actual tribunal trial of the movie but also, as a byproduct, indirectly commenting on the Bush administration in the context of 9/11.

After the start of the movie on the battlefield in 1863, a cut takes the viewer to a homecoming party in 1865, right after General Lee surrendered to the Union. Even though Lincoln is not around, the secretary of war states that the president is not attending the party since “Mrs. Lincoln prefers the theater over being around with soldiers.” It seems that the three soldiers were looking forward to meeting the president and happen to be very sad when being told that he is not around. This helps show Lincoln in a good light. Here, the movie passes the buck of Lincoln’s absence to his wife and leaves the mark of disinterest to her. In terms of historical accuracy, and I only mention that because while the production company claims historical accuracy, it can be at least doubted that it was Mrs. Lincoln’s decision (“*The Conspirator*”). Hence, I assume that the producer wanted to move Lincoln away from any anti-patriotic circumstances.

Lincoln’s assassination is shown as a part of a series of murders of the conspirators attacking the president, vice-president, and secretary of state simultaneously. Lincoln is depicted watching a play at Ford’s theater on a balcony. The president is only shown very briefly, sitting rather relaxed and attentively on the balcony before the assassination takes place. He is shot from behind by the actor John W. Booth, who then jumps from the balcony onto the stage, yelling “sic semper tyrannis, the south is revenged”. The Latin phrase happens to be the state motto of Virginia and can be translated metaphorically as “death to tyrants”. By this means, the viewer is easily presented with Booth’s motivation—taking revenge for the defeated South. The President is presented as a calm person who is interested in a light comedy, close to his people.

After being shot down, panic and chaos break out—which was the intention of director Robert Redford (audio comments). The injured president is carried on a stretcher across the overcrowded street in a search for a house to accommodate him. In contrast to historical records, Lincoln is fully clothed in this scene—his hands are even folded on his belly—and not shown in a dishonorable position, which underlines my view that it is the goal to make him look presidential and heroic. After several unsuccessful attempts to find a house, he is eventually carried into one and placed on a bed which is too small. Although historically correct, this explicit close-up has the potential of making Lincoln appear superior in contrast to the common people. The house is soon packed with officers and politicians, who are trying to grasp the situation. As mentioned before, the minutes after Lincoln’s assassination are packed with panic and mayhem. People are crying, streets are overcrowded and all of this is accompanied by a melodramatic score. In my opinion, all of this serves to show Lincoln’s importance to the people. The sorrow and anger of the common people, a quick start to the investigation by the police all underline the fact that the loss of the leader leaves a huge void. Approving this, Anthony Lane states in his article on the movie that if the viewers closed their eyes, they “would swear that you were attending not a movie screening but an act of worship” (Lane).

The next scene closely related to Abraham Lincoln is a collage of how the nation is in grief. Telegraphing journalists, cross-fading newspaper articles with headlines such as “President Lincoln Murdered—Nation in Shock”, or a bounty hunter bill promising a reward of \$100,000, are shown as well as fractions of the manhunt of the conspirators. After a short “normal” scene of the capture and shooting of Booth, the movie gets back to its collage theme and focuses on the work of mourning of the American people. Fractions of newspapers stating, for example “Nation Mourns—Train Bearing Lincoln’s Remains Moves across Country” are blended over a moving train. The next shown headline, “One Million People View Abraham Lincoln”, demonstrates to the movie viewer that a lot of people are really sorry about the loss and show respect to the sixteenth president while his body is carried across the country on the train. The scene ends with a view of the steam locomotive which brought Lincoln to his final resting place, Springfield, IL, carrying a portrait of Lincoln at the front, and people standing around the platform. Within only two minutes and 45 seconds<sup>154</sup>,

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<sup>154</sup> From 14:02 to 16:46 in the movie

the movie shows the power and impact of the Lincoln's death to the nation and succeeds in depicting him as a popular president by conveying the impression of the whole nation suffering and mourning.

The president's popularity is also underlined in a scene where Aiken is shown passing through a group of hucksters selling memorial objects on his way to the courtroom. For instance, they are selling signs with printings "He Lives in the Hearts of the People" or portraits with slogans such as "The Late Lamented President Lincoln" or alike. The place is very busy and visitors seem to purchase a lot, thereby emphasizing Lincoln's popularity at the time and giving a hint at his potential of becoming one of the most worshiped presidents in US history.

However, the most important reference to Lincoln appears rather late in the film when Aiken convinces Judge Wylie to hand out the crucial writ of habeas corpus. After a short debate on the importance of a fair trial, Aiken confronts the judge by saying ". . . but I hope, I trust, that President Lincoln appointed you because you hold the constitution sacred" (1:41.14). The whole conversation perfectly summarizes one of the main issues and antagonisms of the movie: military tribunal versus civil court concomitant with constitutional rights versus special rules in times of war; proper investigations by abiding the law versus influencing witnesses in order to try to keep the war won. The fact that Judge Wylie, who explicitly mentions that he was personally appointed by President Lincoln, signs the writ, clearly positions Lincoln's view on the main issue of the film, i.e., holding to the constitution. Thus, the President is set on Aiken's side and portrayed as an advocate and a defender of the immanent and constitutional given rights of every citizen, in times of war and peace.

According to Robert Redford's audio comment, it was not the main intention of the movie to draw any comparisons to post 9/11 United States and the Bush administration, but numerous parallels can be found and have been mentioned by various reviews (Stevens, Corliss, Scott 2011). Hence, I argue that the movie has at least tendencies to use Lincoln as a means to criticize recent US politicians and policies by representing him as a man of the constitution, values, and principles. For him, those outweigh, and contracts him to, the short-term political aims of remaining in political power and pleasing the audience, i.e. the voters—be it sentencing Mrs. Surratt instead of her son compared to invading Iraq or opening Guantanamo instead of fighting for justice with civil means.



While watching the movie, the viewer is, at least in my opinion, eager to find out whether Mrs. Surrat is going to be sentenced to death or not. It is less about the question whether she is guilty or not. By linking Abraham Lincoln closely to the constitution, no matter the circumstances, the viewer is likely to reject and detest the way Mrs. Surrat's case is handled and wants, in my view, to go with Aiken the honorable way to find out about her guilt before a civil court with full rights attached. All in all, it has been shown that the sixteenth president of the United States of America is depicted in the movie "the Conspirator" as a noble personality and even though he is assassinated very early in the movie, his personality overshadows the plot as a sort of conscience that is closely linked with the thoughts of the founding fathers, i.e., the constitution.

Lincoln as a Moral Authority : Call for Leadership  
 Animated Series, *MAD*, "LinKong"

The crossover of "ape" King Kong and President "Abe" Lincoln into LinKong makes up the kickoff for the satirical and ironical imitation of the original movie. Although one of the side effects of rewriting and peppering up the original storyline might be a criticism of the boredom of the film, I do not see that fitting out the president with a giant ape-like stature occurs to demystify him and rather see hints at today's need for a powerfully and skilled leader.

Abraham Lincoln, presented as a giant gorilla wearing the typical hat and beard, arrives by train at Gettysburg, where he is awaited by many citizens, and gives an altered version of the Gettysburg Address at the train station. In the next scene, Lincoln walks down a hallway in the White House along with Taddeus Stevens. The latter tells the president that Congress does not trust his ability to lead. Also, Lincoln's cabinet is depicted as dinosaurs that want to eat him and in this context Lincoln refers to the importance of being surrounded by different opinions, just to smash down all the dinosaurs immediately after. In the following take, Stevens talks to Lincoln in front of the Capitol, giving the president the advice of spending more "face time" with the members of congress. This results in Lincoln crushing a window and taking out three members in his giant hand, among them Fernando Woods. In the following scene, Lincoln and other politicians introduced wait at a train station for General Lee to arrive. The president is told to do nothing, agrees, eats a banana, and throws away its

skin. As a result, the train derails on the skin and Lee calls the surrender off. Everyone gets mad, crying for impeachment. Lincoln has to flee to the top of the non-completed Washington Monument. At this moment, Mecha-Thatcher arrives—a flying robot version of the “Iron Lady” Margaret Thatcher—and she claims the States recolonized. Consequently, President Lincoln is asked for help. After giving a short speech, the ape President fights, wins by stabbing Mecha-Tatcher with the pole of an American flag and goes into the basin of the, bizarrely, already existing Lincoln Memorial. In the last scene, a reference to the “Mothra” (1961) movies by Toho is made: a voice over starts by the tiny “Shobijin” twins who tell the viewer that Lincoln overcame the robot rebellion and eventually signed the Emancipation Proclamation. By humming a certain melody, they summon “Mothra”, who eventually appears and flies over the basin with a destroyed Washington, D.C., in the background. The sequence ends with the twins saying “they are kids folks, gotta keep it interesting”.

The merger of the figures Lincoln and King Kong into LingKong implies taking a more detailed look at Kong and the original movie *King Kong* (1933) as reference. Both figures share the trait of being “original”, meaning that the movie was not based on any novel and that the politician Abraham Lincoln was one of a kind. Generally speaking, both characters have in common their allowing various ways of interpretations and assumptions and that their legacies having been adapted by various agents. For instance, the story of King Kong has been used to comment on issues such as race, gender, communism, or classes (Rosen 7ff., Erb 3); Lincoln, as this very chapter explains, on issues such as gay rights, leadership, etc. Kong’s exhibition as the Eighth Wonder of the World might mirror Lincoln’s legacy being dragged around and exploited. Whereas Kong protects a blond woman that later becomes the reason for his death (“It was Beauty killed the Beast”) from dinosaurs and snakes, Lincoln also fights the same creatures. The comparison suggests itself that the president is trying to protect the Union and emancipation and is eventually killed for those very reasons.

As described in the summary, the cartoon starts with the arrival of President Lincoln at Gettysburg via train. Similar to the president’s introduction in the original movie, the audience first encounters a high-pitched voice that only later is connected to Lincoln. Also, the Gettysburg Address is the topic in both starting scenes, though being approached differently. Various characters from the movie are among the waiting audience; their faces appear to be animated photographs taken from the movie attached to drawn comic-like bodies

to underline the reference to the movie *Lincoln*. Representative Wood and Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens wonder: “I keep forgetting how tall he is.”, “I keep forgetting his voice is so high.”, and finally “I keep forgetting he’s a 20 ft. gorilla!” With the first two remarks they strike a chord with my analysis of the opening scene of “*Lincoln*” in which a black soldier asks the president how tall he really is. Also, it has been discussed in several interviews by the filmmakers that the audience might be surprised about how Lincoln actually sounded like. With the third comment, however, the tone for the upcoming satire is set and the president is introduced as a gorilla who delivers an alternate version of the Gettysburg address, thereby only uttering the probably two best known sections of it, namely the first line and the, even though changed, concluding sentence: “Four score and seven years ago” and “and that government of the people, by the people, and run by a giant monster ape, shall not perish from this earth!” respectively. By replacing “for the people” by “run by a giant monster ape”, might serve as a critique that Lincoln did not succor the people but only took care of his own. However, since the scene ends with one of the spectators breaking the fourth wall and directly addressing the audience by saying “how else are kids gonna be interested in a movie about a dead president?”, the aforementioned criticism is a bit softened as the gorilla crossover is justified as to be more attractive for a younger audience, thereby also including a potential indirect criticism on the media industry as to how they alter and adjust Lincoln to their profit needs (as indicated in comparison to *King Kong*).

In the next scene, President Lincoln walks along a hallway in the White House accompanied by a miniature version of Thaddeus Stevens, the leader of the radical wing. The walls are decorated with portraits of recent presidents, such as Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, potentially targeting at establishing a relationship between Stevens’ alleged criticism of today’s politics and problems of the presidency. These include Lincoln’s alleged inability to lead—similar to the movie “*Lincoln*”—and him being under attacked by his cabinet members, which is illustrated by a cabinet room full of dinosaurs and a T-Rex trying to bite Linkong’s arm off. In contrast to the rhetorical skills that the president made use of in “*Lincoln*” to get his cabinet behind him, Linkong appears violent, eventually beating up the cabinet behind closed doors. Interestingly, the gorilla president directly refers to the book *Team of Rivals*—on which the film was based—by explaining Stevens the importance of “fill[ing] yer team with people of different opinions—a team of rivals”. Though this feature might be attributed positively and nobly to Abraham Lincoln’s depiction, the fact that

Linkong beats up his dinosaur cabinet members after angrily asking if “anyone else got some different opinions?” takes back this positive side and, in my opinion, satirizes his actions of bribery and persuasion in the movie. Another image of this short sequence in the White House is Linkong handing over his giant hat to Stevens, asking him to “hold it for a sec”. Funnily, miniature Stevens is fully covered by the hat, seeking for help as he “can’t breathe”. I deduce from this situation that, maybe not even knowingly, Lincoln minimizes Stevens’ opportunities to influence and, more importantly, that the leader of the radical wing is not able to cope with the great tasks presidency holds.

After a cut, the discussion goes on in front of the Congress. This time Stevens urges Linkong to spend more “face time” with the members in order to get support for bills, explicitly not mentioning any anti-slavery measure at all. As presented, the presidential tactics depicted in the movie *Lincoln* were very manifold; here, however, Linkong resorts to more extreme measures again, bashing the window and pulling out three congress members in his grip out of a running session. He introduces himself by saying “hello, Congress, I’m the President!” and thus inverts both the general perception of Lincoln and Lincoln’s representation within the motion picture *Lincoln* of being a very eloquent and voluble president. However, I place this scene not so much as a criticism of Lincoln’s supposed lack of eloquence but more as a blaming for not taking enough care of his relationship to the legislature. Developing this thought a bit further, this could possibly mean that Lincoln shall be shown as someone who considers himself above the idea of checks and balances and, in keeping with the illustrated bribery in the motion picture, avails himself of unfair means, in this context angst-inducing and violent behavior.

The next incident takes place at the train station of (probably) Appomattox, with Linkong, Stevens and others awaiting General Lee’s arrival and surrender. Again. Stevens explains the circumstances to Linkong and asks him to do nothing, whereupon the gorilla version of Lincoln continues to eat his banana and then throws its peel on the track, which results in the derailling of the train. Lee then calls off the surrender and this eventually leads the present politicians to call for an impeachment which then forces Linkong to flee from the arisen mob. This short extract provides, to my view, several interpretative approaches in terms of potential conclusions on how Abraham Lincoln is represented. First, I consider this excerpt a “what if” story, meaning that it shall demonstrate how close Lincoln was to impeachment (as

performing his “lawyer's dodge” in *Lincoln*) and defeat (as he was not sure about the outcome of the vote). Second and a further development of the “what-if though”, it could be argued that Lincoln threatened peace as it would have come all by itself and, third, if continuing to allege that the authors have a unfavorable view of Lincoln in mind, it accuses Lincoln of having had a lot of luck. If the story ended here, one could argue without the likelihood of having to face opposite views that Lincoln’s depiction is at least inopportune. However, as my interpretation of the next stages will reveal, the president’s representation turns to a more positive, prevailing side.

As Linkong flees to top of the only partly finished monument, the story comes shortly back to historical accuracy (like the intro shot of *Abraham Lincoln - Vampire Hunter*). In spite of the originally planned impeachment, Linkong's enemies seek for help when a new menace in the guise of *Mecha-Thatcher* occurs. The mocking version of the “Iron Lady” starts to destroy Washington D.C. with her heat vision. So Linkong accepts Stevens’ plea and delivers an altered part of the Gettysburg address: “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here but it can never forget that *a giant ape is about to fight a robot lady! And it’s going to be awesome!*” (change highlighted in italics). He eventually fights *Mecha-Thatcher* to death, highly symbolic by ramming a pole with a waving flag of the U.S. into her iron chest. This time, the apelike president’s physical strength is needed and appreciated, uniting the former rivals against a mutual enemy. In this context, the robot version of the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom incarnates the threat of old England and potentially stimulates reminiscence of fighting together for a common cause, be it independence (reference to George Washington) or unity (connected to Abraham Lincoln). Thus, at this point of the story, Lincoln to my view is assigned with rescue and savior related symbolism. At this point, emancipation has not played a role at all but will be touched in the subsequent, final scene of “Linkong”.

In the last scene, the sketch versions of the aforementioned Shobijin twins enter the stage, start narrating the story and state that “President Linkong defeated Mecha Thatcher, crushed the Robot Rebellion, and signed the Emancipation Proclamation.” This historical inaccuracy—the Emancipation Proclamation was signed a year before Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address—may be excused by the presumption that the mentioning of the proclamation might nevertheless serve as a symbol for the abolishment of slavery for the

unschooled audience. However, it is important to remark that the emancipation of slaves finds reference in a sub-sentence towards the end of the entire storyline only. Furthermore, the Shobijin twins continue in relativizing the president's overall influence on the events as they claim that "they say 'history is written by the winners.' But the truth is: it is made up by us. Tiny twins who can also summon Mothra Washington." The twins then call for the giant moth from the Godzilla movies. Since Mothra symbolizes the mother of Earth, "a savior deity for all mankind" (Adams), one could argue about her exact symbolic function. However, it is sufficient enough for my purpose to state that the presence of this godly figure potentially lowers Linkong's and Lincoln's status respectively.

Both satire in general and *MAD* specifically are defined and known for their exaggerated exposure of other popular artifacts. In the example discussed above the *MAD* producers created a humorous and almost ridiculous cartoon to show and, under the umbrella of its satirical purpose, criticize the depiction of Abraham Lincoln in the movie "Lincoln". I hereby defend calling the segment a satire by applying Jean Weisgreber's choice of a definition from the Webster's New World Dictionary that defines satire as a "work in which vices, follies, stupidities, abuses, etc., are held up to ridicule and contempt" (Weisgerber 157). Even though the satirical impact might be softened a bit by the twin's remark "they're kids, folks. Gooootta keep it interesting"—allowing an excuse for their harsh representation of Lincoln by the attempt to appeal to a young audience—I still claim that the discussed potentially negative representations of the sixteenth president do not make up the major part of "Linkong. What remains, however, is that LinKong/Lincoln saved the U.S. from evil, which is perfectly transferable to current threats, such as terrorism and anxieties. In this context, I also see a justification for exceptional measures of a president and an appeal for strong leadership and sacrifices.

### Lincoln as a Moral Authority: Call for Leadership

#### *Internet Memes*

As a result of my research, memes depicting Lincoln as a superhuman, over-the-top "bad ass" make up a second category and I allocate to those depictions a call for strong leadership.



Fig.1."The Civil War". Digital Picture by Matthew McKeown on his personal homepage. 29. April 2011. Web. March 2016.

The first example has “a sophisticated bear with a mustache riding Abraham Lincoln with laser eyes into glorious battle”, as artist Matthew McKeown aka Kanaru92 puts it on his personal homepage. While the animal is equipped with the typical stovepipe hat, a monocle and is holding a partly ripped Union flag, the president is crawling and two laser beams come out of his eyes, which makes him appear strong beyond nature. According to my interpretation, Lincoln is depicted as a successful commander-in-chief, strong enough to carry a bear. Furthermore, I assume from the bear’s appearance that it depicts an animal version of President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt and this connection opens more room for interpretation. Since Lincoln carries the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, I claim that it was the former’s groundwork that Roosevelt based his actions on. Both commander-in-chiefs were fighting in wars, Lincoln in the Black Hawk War and his successor in the Spanish-American-War, and therefore represent statesmen of actions.



Fig.2. "Abe Lincoln Riding a Grizzly". Digital Picture by Jason Heuser (SharpWriter) from Deviant Art. N.d. Web. March 2016.

Jason Heuser created a slightly different approach, but has Lincoln and a bear in one picture as well. This time, however, the president is equipped with his hat, a bow tie, and an automatic rifle. He rides the animal, thereby looking at the viewer while presenting the Emancipation Proclamation. The arguably most American element is the housing in the form of a Union flag. The bear possesses no human elements, meaning it is not depicted as sophisticated but wild, which lets me infer that Lincoln is in control of the bear. The writing "the Emancipator" on the machine gun suggests that Lincoln's use of violence, i.e., going into war, was a favorable decision according to the author. Interestingly, Heuser offered the picture for everyone free to use as he was looking for a job. Since he states on his website that he wants to "[s]upport America, and by America I mean me creating me more of these pictures", I claim that he tried to have the picture as American as possible in order to boost his chances of their becoming circulating and popular. Hence, the use of Lincoln in this very piece of popular art is, in my opinion, to promote the artists own purpose. Furthermore, the president serves as a patriotic symbol for America itself, with the act of emancipating the slaves as one of the most important steps of US history.

### Criticizing Recent Developments

Besides the already tackled MAD's subtle criticism of the movie *Lincoln*, there are several other occasions where the figure of Abraham Lincoln is used to criticize and comment on contemporary issues, as for example the uncritical usage of citations, political figures such as



George W. Bush, the hype around celebrities like Chuck Norris, or the practices of the advertising industry,

### Criticizing: Assigning Lincoln Wrong Quotations

#### *Internet Memes*

Several similar forms of memes exist which associate Lincoln to quotes that he obviously did not utter this way. In my view, the most prominent example is his use as a warning that one should not believe everything that is posted on the Internet. Sometimes this is conveyed rather directly, sometimes in a more subtle, ironic way:

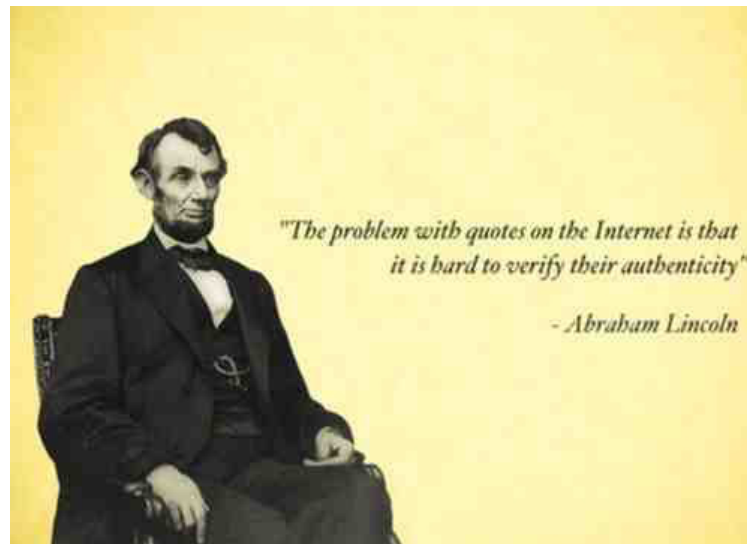


Fig.3."The Problem with Quotes". Digital Picture. *Imgur*. [imgur.com](http://imgur.com). N.d. Web. March 2016.

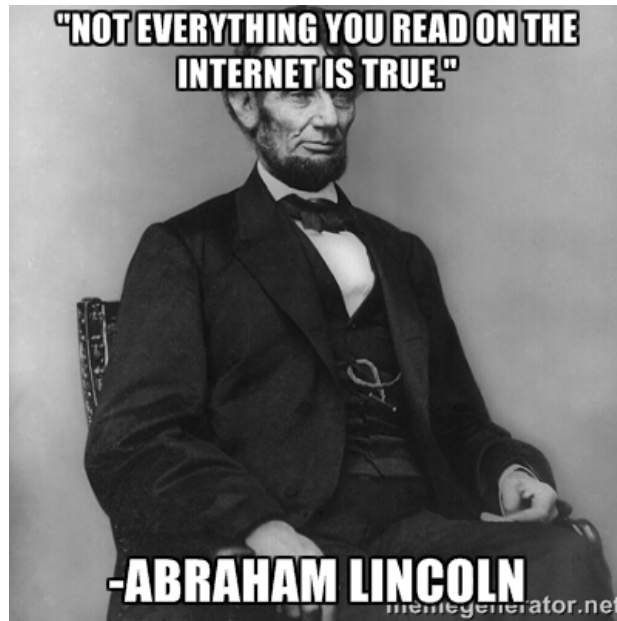


Fig. 4. “Not Everything You Read”. Digital Picture. *Memegenerator*.  
Cdn.meme.com, N.d. Web. March 2016.

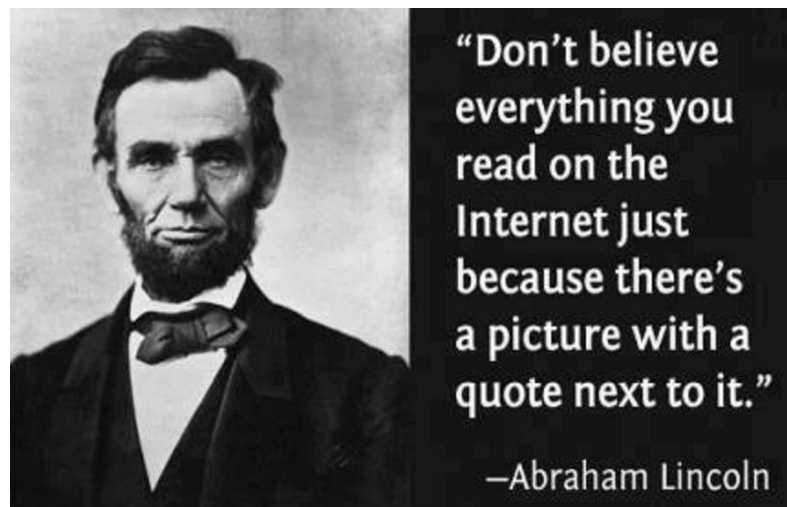


Fig. 5. Radonjic, Ivan. “Don’t Believe Everything You Read”. Digital Picture. Personal Homepage.  
Ivanradonjic.me, August 2015. Web. March 2016.

Obviously, the Internet did not exist when Lincoln was alive. The fact that a long dead president is used to pick up the topic of quote accuracy leads me to infer two points. First, I claim that the sixteenth president has the potential of being recognized as a father figure, which can be used to give warnings as his word is accepted. Second, Lincoln is used because he is affected himself and is now taking a stand, of course through the minds of the posters, against the misuse of his name in connection to quotes circulating on the web.

The reasons probably apply to other wrong quotes that are linked to Lincoln:

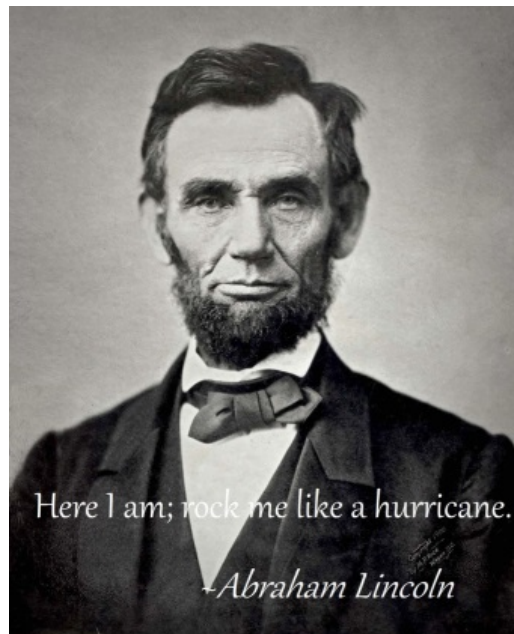


Fig. 6. "Here I am". Digital Picture. *Imgur*. Imgur.com. N.d. Web. March 2106.

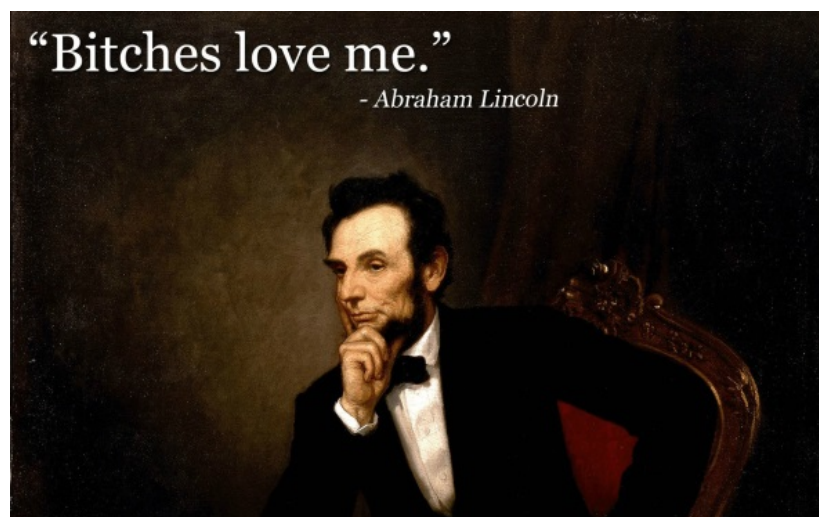


Fig. 7. "Bitches Love Me". Digital Picture. *Imgur*. Imgur.com. N.d. Web. March 2015.

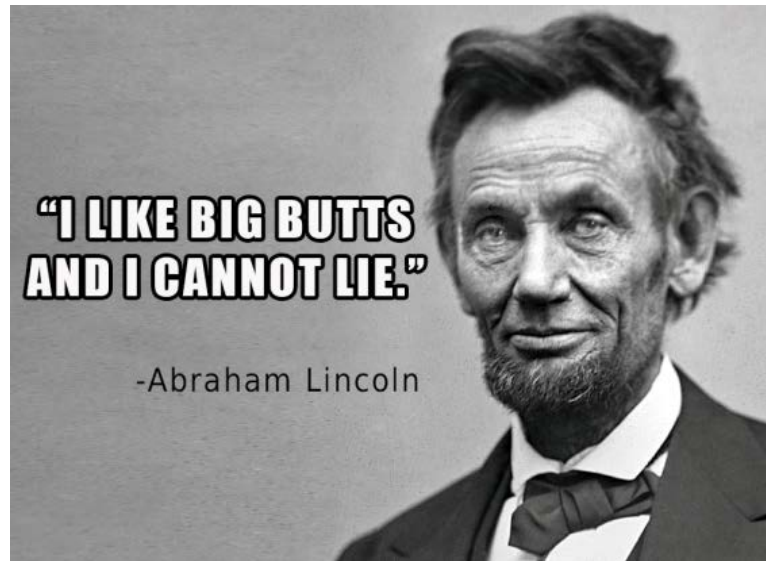


Fig. 8. "I Like Big Butts". Digital Picture. Imgur. [imgur.com](http://imgur.com). N.d. Web. March 2015.

All three examples are quotes taken from lyrics, with Lil Wayne, the Scorpions, and Sir Mix-A-Lot respectively being the original artists. I explain this adaption of known song lines on a potential reciprocal basis. On the one hand, those citations might be imposed on Lincoln as the original poster uses them to voice their opinion on the former president. For instance, a possible goal might be to communicate Lincoln's hipness or coolness factor—which will become topical later on. This might happen in relation to boosting Lincoln's reputation by linking popular quotes with his image, showing admiration with the intention of funnily making Lincoln the author of them. On the other hand, the usage of "wrong quotes" might work the other way around, namely that Lincoln gives the original quotes a different purpose. This possibly happens due to the aforementioned reasons and, hence, works as a reinforcement of the above-mentioned examples, serving as a funny way of warning about the misuse and wrong attribution of quotations. The quote from Sir Mix-A-Lot, though, also plays with Lincoln's distinction as an honest man, thereby achieving a humorous potential—which also echoes the people's views on the sixteenth president.

Another example of a quote that Lincoln obviously did not say is his commenting on today's artist Kanye West:

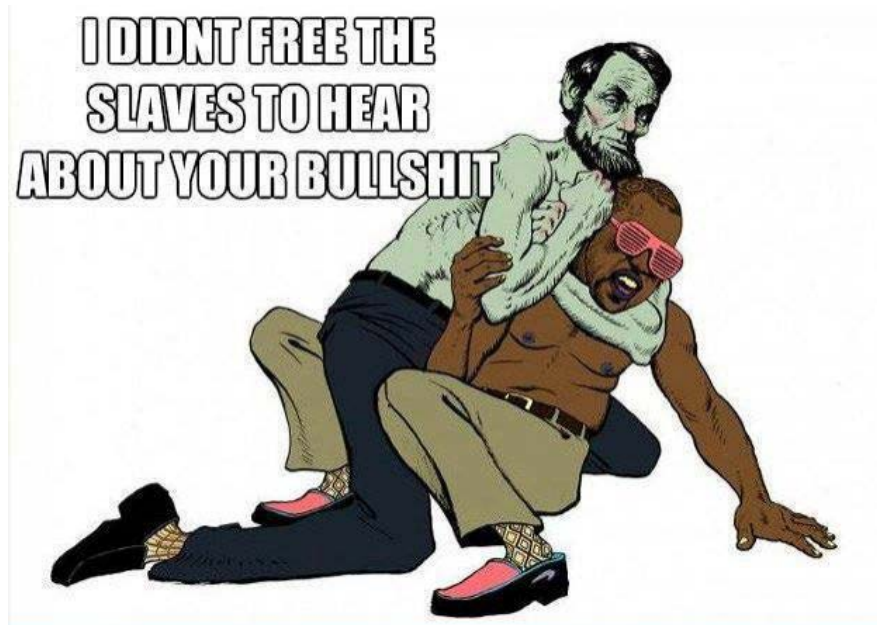


Fig. 9. “I Didn’t Free the Slaves to Hear about Your Bullshit”. Digital Picture. *Pinterest*. Pinterest.com. N.d. Web. March 2016.

Here, Lincoln is used to comment on a current subject, i.e., criticizing the artist Kanye West. The greenish color of his skin suggests that he rose from his grave to apply his wrestling skills on West. The pointed depiction of a president, who is an exemplary representative of the motto “freedom for all” and is tired of an artistic performance of a black singer, is a way of discrediting Mr. West artistic skills and nothing more. Although to some extent regarded as racist (“Lincoln VS Kanye”) I would only agree with this accusation when taking the defamation to a general level of an imposing white culture versus an oppressed black one. However, I regard this meme as a funny and pointed way of criticizing West in particular by saying that the emancipation and way paved to complete freedom likewise implies an artistic freedom, and that it is sometimes hard and almost impossible to tolerate certain performances and artistic license.

Criticizing Today's Politics: The Bush Administration  
Animated Series, *Robot Chicken*, "Star Wars"

The special episode "Robot Chicken: Star Wars" is mainly a parody of the original Star Wars movies and their characters. However, an independent segment in the middle of the episode takes three politicians—Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Abraham Lincoln—into Star Wars themed adventure<sup>155</sup>. I claim that this digression mainly serves to mock the then president George W. Bush. The short excursion starts with Bush realizing that he possesses Jedi-like power and he instantly uses it to drop his doctor's pants, convince his wife to have a threesome with Condoleeza Rice, and dump Bill Clinton's car in a nearby pond as he wants to park the presidential limousine in his predecessor's parking spot. In the following scene, George W. Bush, wearing a green combat suite, is seen engraving "W wuz hear" into the chair of the Lincoln Memorial. This leads to the Memorial lifting up and the sixteenth president appears in a similar way to how Darth Vader was introduced in "The Empire Strikes Back". This time, however, Lincoln is automatically wearing his typical stovepipe hat instead of the typical Vader mask. Then comes the characteristic theme of the Empire. The just awakened former president asks "who dares disturb my slumber"<sup>156</sup> and refers to himself as "I who freed the slaves; I who united..." when being interrupted by Bush and challenged for a lightsaber duel (see appendix, fig. 20). The fight scene ends at what is arguably intended to be the Vietnam Veterans Memorial<sup>157</sup> when Bush defeats Lincoln and refers to him as George Washington. The end of the segment is that Bush only dreamed of this and really wishes to have Jedi powers to make people believe him without questioning.

Although Lincoln's appearance only lasts roughly fifteen seconds, I consider his role fruitful in connection to this thesis as he serves various potential functions. First and foremost, Lincoln's character helps the authors to demystify and ridicule then-president George W. Bush as the latter is portrayed in a flagrant, ignorant, and disrespectful way through comparing him to Abraham Lincoln. Clinton's successor shows a lack of respect not only by damaging the Lincoln Memorial, but he does not let Lincoln finish his comments twice—for the first time, when Lincoln tries to teach "George W." about his historical accomplishments and a second time, when Lincoln tries to warn Bush before the 20<sup>th</sup> century presidents kills

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<sup>155</sup> It also ran as a segment "Jedi Master George W." in episode 29 "Message Chair" (Season Two).

<sup>156</sup> Reference to Disney's Aladdin.

<sup>157</sup> Names of creator Seth Green and probably other staff members engraved, own perception.

the one from the 19<sup>th</sup>. To cap it all off, the son of H. W. Bush is revealed as not even knowing who is fighting, as he thinks Lincoln is George Washington. All these examples show that the figure Lincoln is used as a counter example of Bush and should lead the audience to think how bad and stupid the then-president behaves<sup>158</sup>. Secondly, as already noted, Lincoln is portrayed in a rather noble way. Even though he is initially closely linked to the dark side, i.e. the Empire, it is later revealed that it was only George Bush who wished he was a “good” Jedi and Lincoln was a “bad” Sith Lord. Lincoln neither starts the fight, nor does he try to offend Bush in any way. Also, the storyline of Star Wars has Darth Vader finally turning into a Jedi again. Transferred to real-life politics, this could be understood as a criticism on the Texan president for going into war for no reason on the one hand, and as a supportive statement for Lincoln for only taking acts of war if really needed. I justify my interpretation of a fully positive representation of Lincoln by the fact that the creator personally seems to admire the sixteenth president as he has tweeted at least two pictures of himself in front of the Lincoln Memorial and, furthermore, stated in an interview that he wanted Hulk Hogan to voice Lincoln because Green wanted “a booming, authoritative, powerful voice” (Goldmann).

Another thought on a potential role of Lincoln in this short segment is the idea that putting him in this adventurous mash up of Star Wars and Robot Chicken, two inherently treasured concepts, the author might try to make use of the different popularities to bring Lincoln close to a younger audience that might not have been too interested in a too monumental depiction. Certainly, this might be true for many other examples of representation of Abraham Lincoln in popular culture. Also, this argument works as well the other way around as depicting Lincoln always holds the potential of benefiting from his popularity for one’s own purposes.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Another example is the level of eloquence, as Bush is depicted stammering.

<sup>159</sup> “Over its four airings, the special received 5.7 million viewers ages 12 and up. It helped Adult Swim regain the status as the #1 cable network for total day delivery of young adults ages 18–34 and 18–24.” (“Robot Chicken: Star Wars”).

## Criticizing: Presidential Campaigns

### Video, *Epic Rap Battles of History*, “Barack Obama vs Mitt Romney”

The video “Barack Obama vs Mitt Romney” features the then US President battling his Republican contender Mitt Romney and was released less than a month prior to the 2012 Presidential Elections. It has been viewed by more than 100 million people on YouTube (as of January 2015). Each contestant performs one verse defaming their respective rival. Romney mainly focuses on boasting because of his wealth (“I’m rich! I’ve got fat stacks”, referring to “Bain Capital” and “silver spoons”) and passing criticism on his opponent’s presidential policies (“no change”, Guantanamo still open, unemployment rate, etc.). Obama mentions Romney’s peculiar looks (“momma jeans”, “Mr. Fantastic face”), his low intelligence (“head of cabbage”), and that he does not have a clear and own opinion on several issues but is rather controlled by other Republicans (“Republicans need a puppet”). In the following, the cut and thrust of the debate leads to an absurd back and forth, ending in a lowbrow argument of “you’re stupids”, “errghs”, and “aarrghs”. This is when Abraham Lincoln approaches the scenery in the claws of a bald eagle and takes over the floor, giving a proper talking to both brawlers:

By the power invested in me by this giant bald bird,  
 The President shall not be the shiniest of two turds!  
 You! I wanna like you! Don't talk about change, just do it!  
 I fought for what was on my brain until a bullet went through it!  
 And you, moneybags, you're a pancake; you're flip-floppity!  
 It's a country, not a company you can play like Monopoly!  
 I'll properly reach across the aisle and bitch-smack you as equals!  
 Of the people, by the people, for the people!  
 Eagle!

In contrast to his first participation in an *Epic Rap Battle*, Lincoln this time is not one of the main contestants but crashes the battle in the manner of a higher authority. The former president seems eminently unsatisfied with both actual participants as he is hauling the two presidential candidates over the coals. Lincoln’s entrance could not have been more American as he is flown in grasped in the claws of a bald eagle, the national bird and animal of the United States of America. Lincoln wears the already known outfit from season one and



substantiates his authority by his first very formal words straight away (“by the power invested in me”; the eagle arguably symbolizing the empowerment by the American people). Line two reveals that Lincoln disapproves of both characters as the two do not seem to live up to the high standards Lincoln sets to the presidential office, implying that he himself once met (“The President shall not be the shiniest of two turds”). In the following, he reasons his criticism and directs it towards Obama and Romney one after the other. The self-declared authority alleges the current president is not trying hard enough to push through the announced “change” and, in this context, citing himself for having lost his life for his model of change back in the nineteenth century. Romney, on the other hand, gets his (just) desert as Lincoln accuses him of not bearing up and veering his opinion like a weather vane turning in the wind. Moreover, the former head of state denies Romney’s ability to run a country—even though he might be a successful businessman. Before calling for the eagle to make a graceful exit, Abraham Lincoln slaps both contestants in order to come to a compromise in the name of the people—claiming this by quoting his own Gettysburg Address (“of the people, by the people, for the people”).

I consider the potential functions of this representation of Lincoln to be closely related to the date of release of the video less than one month before the 2012 presidential elections. The elaborated depictions of the visitor from the nineteenth century let me conjecture that the producers aimed at taking part in and having influence on a then highly topical proposition. In doing so, they use Lincoln as the epitome of old values for which he confidently fought until his death and let him serve as a counselor for today’s political elite—holding up the mirror to two modern politicians in particular but potentially to a whole generation of representatives. As previously mentioned, YouTube, as a conveyer of political messages, might open a gateway to a young, politically apathetic group and call its attention back to politics. This idea puts me close to LaChrystal D. Ricke who claims that these kinds of videos “can have an impact on political communication” (40).

Considering both appearances, I have outlined that the Lincoln character serves different potential functions in *Epic Rap Battles of History*. The first video is mainly used to worship and recall him as a warrior, emancipator, and kind of martyr that comments on a modern phenomenon of popular culture. Based on this introduction, I stated that he could be used as a higher authority in video two. This superiority enables him to take on the role of a political

archetype, showing both modern politics and the (American) people what to do. I also argued that this might specifically be fruitful among a young audience that is affined to the Internet.

#### Criticizing: Intervening the Media Hype around Chuck Norris

##### Video, *Epic Rap Battles*, “Abe Lincoln vs Chuck Norris”

The segment “Abe Lincoln vs Chuck Norris” has been viewed by more than 66 million people (as of December 2014) and more than 300,000 users commented on this video. In the years prior to the video’s release in 2010, actor Chuck Norris had been hyped to cult status due to his stereotypical roles as an undefeatable action super hero. This hyperbole and admiration was expressed by so called “Chuck Norris Facts” that were widely circulating on the Internet and imputed supernatural strength and power to Norris, creating its humor by its widely exaggerated absurd style<sup>160</sup>. Whereas I consider the lyrics to be the more important in terms of inferring potential functions of Lincoln’s representation in this comedy format, first a short note on the President’s appearance: he is depicted bearded, with a white shirt and a black vest, dressed with a bow tie and stovepipe hat. One striking feature that by far exceeds the expected outfit is his silver teeth grills, which potentially mirror an aggressive attitude towards his opponent. This perfectly matches Lincoln’s rap style and lyrics:

[Verse 1: Abe Lincoln]

Four score and 65 years in the past  
 I won the Civil War with my beard  
 Now I’m here to whup your ass  
 I’ve read up on your facts  
 You cure cancer with your tears?  
 Well, tell me Chuck how come you never sat down and cried on your career?  
 You’re a washed up has been on TV selling Total Gyms  
 And you’re gonna lose this battle  
 Like you lost Return of the Dragon  
 I’ll rip your chest hairs out  
 Put em’ in my mouth  
 I’ll squash you like I squashed the South

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<sup>160</sup> For instance, “Death once had a near-Chuck Norris experience”.

I never told a lie  
 And I won't start now  
 You're a horse with a limp  
 I'll put you down

[Verse 2: Chuck Norris]

This isn't Gettysburg, punk  
 I'd suggest retreating  
 For I invented rap music  
 When my heart started beating  
 Chuck Norris doesn't battle  
 He just allow you to lose  
 My raps will blow your mind like a verbal John Wilkes Booth

[Verse 3: Abe Lincoln]

I've got my face on the side of a mountain  
 You voted for John McCain  
 I've got a bucket full of my head and I'm about to make it rain  
 You block bullets with your beard?  
 I catch em' with my skull  
 I'd make fun of Walker, Texas Ranger but I've never ever seen that show

[Verse 4: Chuck Norris]

I am Chuck Fucking Norris!  
 I've spread more blood and gore  
 Than forty score of your puny Civil Wars, bitch  
 I split the Union with a roundhouse kick  
 I wear a black belt on the beard that I grow on my dick  
 I attack sharks when I smell them bleed  
 I don't go swimming  
 Water just wants to be around me  
 My fists make the speed of light wish that it was faster  
 You may have freed the slaves  
 But Chuck is everyone's master

Although this rap text is shaped by harsh language and exaggerated views, I will work out several topics that make up Lincoln's depiction—some of which are brought up by the

rapping president himself in order to outrank Norris, others being mentioned by the martial artist to defame his battle partner. I have categorized them into character traits, presidential acts, and his legacy.

In terms of characteristic, the first and foremost example is that the whole idea of battle rapping nicely corresponds to Lincoln's often indicated eloquence and, as I see it, underlines the president's repartee. This assumption is also demonstrated by a reference to one of Lincoln's most popular speeches, the Gettysburg Address ("four score and 65 years")—which, on a side note, Norris even makes fun of ("than forty score of your puny Civil Wars, bitch"). Another instance of Lincoln's attributes being thematized is his constant honesty. The former President even brings it up himself by saying "I never told a lie; And I won't start now".

Speaking of references about his time as a president, the verbal exchange refers to the Civil War and the North's victory ("I'll squash you like I squashed the South")—accomplished by a very manly ("Put [chest hair] in my mouth") Commander in Chief. Furthermore, the president's achievement of freeing the slaves is mentioned—something that his rival Norris admits only to turn it back to him in the next line ("You may have freed the slaves; But Chuck is everyone's master"). A third reference about his presidency is a two-time mentioning of his assassination by both battlers. Lincoln, on the one hand, taps it by claiming he catches bullets with his skull. Norris, on the other hand, compares his rap skills with the impact of John Wilkes Booth's bullet.

Lincoln refers to his legacy and commemoration twice in verse three. He claims to have his "face on the side of a mountain", thereby pointing to the 60-foot carved sculpture of his likeness at Mt. Rushmore. Also, he empties "a bucket full of [his] head", i.e. penny coins bearing his image, onto Norris's head. Both examples might serve as to emphasize Lincoln's manifold memorial signs and importance in present-day America.

As outlined, various representations of Lincoln can be found in these lyrics. I consider the characteristic of a rap battle to use strong arguments in order to beat one's opponent verbally, to use topics that are available at a certain level and that should be mostly understandable by the (voting) audience. I also see that normally two rappers come up with their respective rhymes spontaneously—even though this might not be the case in the featured video—

proving eloquence and repartee. This corresponds to my opinion that the authors must have been interested in using potentially popular facts and claims surrounding Lincoln. This led to the above-mentioned representation of the sixteenth president as a strong character that does not shrink from fighting an “invincible” foe. Claiming that rap battles videos on YouTube are rather addressed at an adolescent audience, one potential function of this video might be—besides non-controversial aims of entertaining and bringing humor—recalling and conveying Lincoln’s virtues and most striking features for this younger audience. Opposing him to Norris—primarily a martial art actor that is hyped by said audience but who has not produced any considerable real world achievements, at least compared to Lincoln—makes Lincoln quite a “bad ass” fighter who might arouse interest in a young viewership (LaChrystal 40). This stimulating of interest is supported by the provision of additional information on various fan sites on the World Wide Web.<sup>161</sup>

#### Criticizing: Drug Abuse in Sports (and Desire to See Heroes Failing)

Animated Series, *The Simpsons*, “I Don't Wanna Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”

“I Don't Wanna Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” is episode number four of the nineteenth season of the Simpsons. It was aired for the first time in October 2007. Since Abraham Lincoln’s depiction is placed in the imbedded “Itchy and Scratchy”<sup>162</sup> episode “The Un-natural”—detached from the main plot of the regular episode—I refrain from expanding on the broader framework but solely focus on the comic within the comic.

“The Un-Natural” parodies the baseball steroids scandal of 2007<sup>163</sup> and uses Lincoln as a moral instance standing up against the baseball steroid scandal and the destructive need of some Americans to see heroes failing. Its title refers to the book and movie “The Natural”, a story about a struggling baseball player reaching for fame. In the animated satire, Scratchy is shown failing miserably in a ball game when he strikes out. Despite his initial concerns, he

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<sup>161</sup> The “Wikia of Epic Rap Battles of History” offers a lot of background information on various characters and even gives interpretation of lyrics for further exploration at [epicrapbattlesofhistory.wikia.com](http://epicrapbattlesofhistory.wikia.com).

<sup>162</sup> “The Itchy and Scratchy Show” is a fictional animated series that irregularly appears within *The Simpsons*. It deals with the sadistic blue mouse Itchy regularly killing the miserable black cat Scratchy by using massively exaggerated violence.

<sup>163</sup> In December 2007, the Major League Baseball put out the Mitchell Report, a “Report to the Commissioner of Baseball of an Independent Investigation into the Illegal Use of Steroids and Other Performance Enhancing Substances by Players in Major League Baseball” (G. Mitchell).

eventually accepts Itchy's offer for a steroid shot. Without delay, Scratchy becomes enormously muscular, returns to the batting plate and hits a ball to the South Pole, reaching fame in no time by winning trophies and female fans. Six years later, Scratchy finds himself as an accused "disgrace" before Congress. As a late sequela, he is sweating immensely and still continues to grow, which eventually leads him to reach King-Kong size and makes the Capitol explode. After being attacked by a fighter squadron, he drops into the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. Having watched the scenario, this makes the Lincoln statue come to life. After putting on his (marvel) stovepipe hat, Lincoln takes a fence pole, rips off the head of the inflated muscular cat and slams it right into the "Hall of Shame", where mouse tourists take pictures of their former idol's head (see appendix, fig. 21).

As the release date indicates, this "Itchy and Scratchy" interlude serves as a parody on the then ongoing steroid scandal in professional baseball. As the allusion of the clip's title on the novel "The Natural" leads me to surmise, the animation could also be understood as taking the same path as the novel and serves as a general critique of "modern society's schizophrenic desire to both rise up heroes and then watch them fail" (SparkNotes Editors). This interpretation is accentuated by the entertaining baseball classic "Take Me Out to the Ball Game", always played when spectators appear, be it in the stadium to be entertained or in the hall of shame, seemingly enjoying the fall of the former idol. Lincoln's role, however, is to my view only limited. Resurrecting in form of his marble stature to the strains of "the Battle Hymn of the Republic", I see him being disgusted about how far it has come. As I understand it, he holds the potential of performing as a judging power that is tired of fraud and trickery in general and doping in sport in particular. With his nickname "Honest Abe" in mind, Lincoln seems to be the perfect choice for disapproving and making an appeal for sincerity, dignity, and hard work. The fact that Lincoln acts in such a rough and brutal way is in my opinion due to the general and common violence in the Itchy and Scratchy filmlets.

What remains is the impression that the figure Abraham Lincoln is taken as a symbol for honesty and fairness, doing his share to make the (baseball) world a better place. In keeping with the motto "he would be turning in his grave", the creators let Lincoln revive and express his anger personally. In doing so, the president is part of a feasible, general criticism of the American society as a whole concerning its need for heroes and its pleasure in their failing.

## Criticizing: On Society for Wanting Heroes to Fail

### Video, *Ultimate Showdown of Ultimate Destiny*

According to my understanding, the sixteenth President appears to be one of the main characters as he turns up at three different stages in the course of the tune, overcoming defeats at least twice. Although arguably sketchily drawn, his look nevertheless features several of his typical components, i.e. his stovepipe hat, a beardline, dark suit, and a bow tie. But since this simplicity of drawing is an intended feature of the genre of “animutation”, I do not deduce any negative intentions by the creators towards Lincoln but rather rate it as a general characteristic. His first loom appearance occurs in the latter part of the first stanza, when Godzilla, Batman, Aaron Carter, and Shaquille O’Neal have already been part of the fight.

...

Abraham Lincoln popped out of his grave  
And took an AK47 out from under his hat,  
And blew Batman away with a rat-a-tat-tat,  
But he ran out of bullets and he ran away,  
Because Optimus Prime came to save the day.

In combination with Basketball star Shaquille O’Neal and singer Aaron Carter, Abraham Lincoln represents the group of non-fictional characters. As Batman and Optimus Prime are also involved in the brawl, the levels of real and fictional characters are clearly blended. Lincoln’s representation amounts to a superhuman of great power. As he rises from his grave to take part in the fight, Lincoln is attributed enormous strength and immortality. In this context, he is satirized to some degree as the gravestone reads “‘Abe Raham’ – I got a Lincoln log”. Furthermore, he is equipped with heavy weaponry that he takes out of his hat—conjuring magic tricks, so to say. In relation to the violent depiction, I do not denounce the fact that he shows no mercy and tries to kill Batman, as it is simply part of this dog-eat-dog battle royal. The fact that he already appears in the very first part of the song leads me to infer that he must be important and relevant enough in the creators’ minds to help establish a heroic atmosphere right from the start.

Lincoln’s second and third appearances occur in the second stanza, right after the chorus.

When Abraham Lincoln came back with a machete,  
 But suddenly something caught his leg and he tripped,  
 Indiana Jones took him out with his whip,  
 .....  
 And Jackie Chan deflected it with his fist,  
 Then he jumped in the air and he did a somersault,  
 While Abraham Lincoln tried to polevault,  
 Onto Optimus Prime, but they collided in the air,  
 Then they both got hit by a Care Bear Stare.

This time, the bearded president is equipped with a machete and again, he is not able to win his fights as he is firstly overcome by Indiana Jones and secondly fails at pole-vaulting. Instead, he crashes into Optimus Prime mid-air, only to be defeated by a Care Bear subsequently. Again, several layers of fiction and non-fiction are blended, potentially raising Lincoln up to a supernatural level.

Although Abraham Lincoln does not emerge the winner, his selection alone and his multi-appearance speak for his potential popularity. It was the author's intention to make something the Internet would really love and he eventually decided to have pop culture fight itself (Mackay)—making Lincoln part of it, at least to my understanding, clearly shows their taking advantage of his existing vogue. According to my interpretation, especially the lyrics of the chorus reveal what the song tries to convey, i.e., referring to the very basic and original idea of a typical heroic story—the fight between good and evil till death with the eventual finding of a hero<sup>164</sup>. Making Lincoln such an integral part of it sets him in the top league of America's most famous and popular figures—as the fight is described as a “blend of beloved figures” or “battle between almost every hero in the world” (Geffen). Hence, it is not too far-fetched to say that Lincoln might have been used to gain profit from his *per se* popularity. The president is depicted as a “bad-ass” super hero who does not refrain from putting his life to danger, although his motives remain blurry and do not seem important. On a deeper level, the whole song can be seen as a criticism on the will to see heroes falling and the ever-occurring motif

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<sup>164</sup> “This is the Ultimate Showdown . . . of Ultimate Destiny. Good guys, bad guys, and explosions . . . as far as the eye can see. And only one will survive, I wonder who it will be. This is the Ultimate Showdown of Ultimate Destiny.”



of a fight till death. And Lincoln's example has the potential of showing that even heroes can be defeated—except Mr. Rogers obviously

#### Criticizing: Bashing the Advertising Industry

Animated Series, *Family Guy*, “Mind over Murder”:

One appearance of Lincoln in the *Family Guy* occurs as a part of a fictional commercial for the product “Mintos” in the episode “Mind over Murder” (Season 1, Episode 4). This advertisement is placed at the very start of the episode even before the theme and opening credits are shown and makes up an independent, cutaway part of the period. The ad is based on the typical “Mentos” commercials of the 1990s, in which a problem that happens to people in everyday life is solved by a “fresh” idea whose inspiration is connected with the candy. In this case, *Family Guy* takes the assassination of Abraham Lincoln as the main topic. After having missed shooting Lincoln in front of the theater, John Wilkes Booth pitches the “Mintos” bonbon and gets the idea of assassinating the president in the theater. As it turns out, Booth approaches Abraham Lincoln in his box from behind and shoots him—but only fires through the stove hat. With the happy melody of the original ad in full blossom, Lincoln turns around and smiles at his likewise smiling almost-assassinator (see appendix, fig. 22). The scene then cuts to the Griffin family sitting in their living room and talking about the absurdness and ineffectiveness of the just seen commercial. Peter, on the other hand, stands up and says in a hypnotized manner, “Must kill Lincoln”.

The fake commercial possesses at least two potential functions, one on the general and one on the level of depicting Abraham Lincoln. First, this piece of highly exaggerated marketing mocks not only the actual Mentos commercial in particular but also commercials in general. In my understanding, it contains a social criticism about the stupidity of some commercials that display far-from-reality situations and nevertheless manage to make people buy a wide range of products. In this special case, the intake of a sweet has John Wilkins Booth come up with the idea of following Lincoln into the Ford's Theater and not killing him but only shooting a hole in his stovepipe hat—as if a sugar coated dragee à la Mentos/Mentis could change a hate-filled Southerner's mind about assassinating the President who robbed him of his economic and social basic beliefs. This overblown and over-the-top assumption finds its

climax in the fact that Peter Griffin—in contrast to his family—seems to have totally fallen for the commercial and wants to kill Lincoln. This is, in the first place, certainly not possible anymore and, in the second place, reduces the advertisement even more to absurdity since it wanted to achieve, in my view, the exact opposite. Furthermore, the spokesman of the commercial is not Lincoln but the criminal Booth, which means here, too, the roles are interchanged in order to illustrate the ridiculousness. Second, on a personal level, Lincoln is depicted as overly friendly, in touch with the people, and way too clement. I link these assumptions to his appearance in front of Ford Theater when he enters the building encompassed by other theater-goers and to the overly cheerful reaction after almost getting shot (see picture). All in all, according to my interpretation, the use of Lincoln has the potential of exposing the ludicrousness of contemporary advertisements that are divorced from the real world and in combination with Peter Griffin's reaction the authors manage to demonstrate that there are nevertheless enough people who either fall for the advertised product or do not get the main message of the piece of promotion.

### Criticizing: Bashing the Advertising Industry

Animated Series, *Futurama*: “Head in Jar”

Abraham Lincoln as “Head in the Jar” (see appendix, fig. 23) is a reappearing role in the *Futurama* cosmos, showing up in episodes “When Aliens Attack”, “A Head in the Polls” (both before 2000), “Put Your Head on My Shoulder”, and “All the Presidents’ Heads”.

The concept of “Heads in Jars” enables the storyline to give famous persons of the past and present a voice. A special liquid is able to preserve not only the cloned reincarnation of Abraham Lincoln, but along with him many other presidents and politicians<sup>165</sup>, musicians<sup>166</sup>, actors<sup>167</sup>, and further famous personalities and celebrities. The fact that Lincoln's head was chosen to be part of various episodes is arguably a proof of popularity itself. Though his first two appearances can be described as short cameos that only reflect the general function of the concept of having historic persons appear in the future, the two latter presences offer more depth and potential functions. The first of these will be dealt with in the subsequent chapter as

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<sup>165</sup> For example Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton, George Washington, and many more

<sup>166</sup> For example „the Beastie Boys“, Paula Abdul, or Beck

<sup>167</sup> Leonard Nimoy, William Shatner, Charlie Chaplin,

it mainly contains elements of ridicule, but the second presence is rightly categorized as a reinvention of Lincoln because the scene bears the potential of criticizing the advertising industry for exploiting the president's legacy.

The second appearance as “Lincoln in the Jar” takes place in the episode “Put Your Head On My Shoulder”. After the opening sequence, two jars are shown in front of a red curtain, accompanied with flourishing music. A spotlight illuminates the two jars, revealing the heads of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. The protagonist of this thesis tells the audience “four score and 1145 years ago our forefathers' foreheads conceived a new nation” and the first president of the United States adds “and this Presidents' Day we honoureth those values that my body fought and died for”. The curtain opens and a big car showroom is revealed where a salesman robot relates the values mentioned to “values like this brand new Plymouth V'Ger”. This leads to the main characters of the show, who witness this commercial in front of their home TV, eventually going car shopping. Since Lincoln's words are closely related to the Gettysburg Address<sup>168</sup> and Presidents' Day is still intact, I assume that Lincoln is still known and popular in 31<sup>st</sup> century. Both presidents refer to the history of the United States, the honorable battles they fought to conceive the nation with its great values. Certainly this happens with the use of comic effects, but the fact that great presidents are part of a rather cheesy commercial lets me think that Lincoln's appearance might serve as a potential critique of the downfall of the world of advertisement. In this case, great values are torn down and taken to make up a comparison to a car model, even presented by a malfunctioning robot. One could argue both ways. First, it could be assumed to be a criticism of popular role models that advertise for dubious brands and products just for the money or, second, viewed as a critique of brands themselves that cover their insufficient quality by hiring popular spokesmen and women. But the common outcome of both interpretations is crucial: the ad is successful because it encourages the characters to visit the car dealership and eventually even buy an overpriced car. Hence, in my judgment, the two approaches result in one common criticism, namely the reproach that society in general “inhales” commercial without scrutiny and buys excessively priced products. Lincoln, in this case, degenerates into an advertising character that promotes a good that his reputation—including the values he fought for—clearly surpasses concerning the actual field of application.

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<sup>168</sup> Original text: “Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty...”

Criticizing: Bashing the Advertising Industry and Pro Gay Rights Movement  
 Animated Series, *The Simpsons*, “Treehouse of Horror XIX”

The special Halloween episode “Treehouse of Horror XIX” makes up the fourth section of season twenty and was first aired on November 2, 2008. It is subdivided into three parts and Lincoln appears in the second segment “How to Get Ahead In Dead-Advertising”, a parody of the television drama series “Mad Men”. Homer accidentally kills Krusty after the clown made Maggie sad by defended himself against copyright infringement as he had all of his images removed from the daycare center of the youngest Simpson daughter. Shortly after this incident, Homer is approached by people from the advertising industry who appreciate his deed since they can now use Krusty’s image for commercial purposes without paying royalties or fees. They convince Homer to kill more celebrities for the same purpose. Meanwhile in heaven, the already dead celebrities are indignant at being exploited and decide to go down on earth again to attack the profiteers. During this assault, Homer is killed. When the celebrities return to heaven, they find that Homer has already arrived and locked heaven’s gate as a revenge—leaving him all alone with Abraham Lincoln, who refused to take part in the attack. The segment ends with Lincoln making obvious advances to Homer by grabbing his buttocks (see appendix, fig 24).

Lincoln not only shows up in the closing scene described, but already earlier in the clip. When celebrities are shown having watching how they are utilized by the ad industry, an exemplary commercial for “the Springfield wedding chapel’s annual Presidents’ Day marriage-athon” is shown that depicts George Washington and a bridal Abraham Lincoln getting married and making out. Whereas the founding father seems offended by the advertisement, Abraham Lincoln is not really upset.

To my mind, the most outstanding feature of Abraham Lincoln’s representation in these clips is his obvious embodiment of homosexual tendencies. First, he is pictured dressed and fully made-up as a bride, kissing President Washington (see appendix, fig. 25). Second, he is clearly displayed not opposing this representation—in contrast to George Washington. Third, he seems to enjoy his togetherness with Homer in Heaven as he hits on him by touching his bottom. This peer depiction picks up on a then topical and still controversially discussed

debate of whether the sixteenth president was gay or bisexual. While some scholars claimed to have found evidence that the bearded president lived a gay life (Kramer in Steers 2007, 125), Tripp, Rhue), they were massively criticized by other researchers (Baker 2001, 36ff.; Boritt 2001, xiv ff.; Holzer 2011). Even though it is not relevant for the frame of this thesis to take part in this discussion and still less to try to find an answer to whether Lincoln had homosexual tendencies, I would nevertheless like to point out the ongoing controversy and the Simpsons' taking part in it.

Lincoln is the only person in "Celebrity Heaven" who does not mind being used as an advertising icon—even in the case of being displayed gay—and thus does not take part in the revenge acts. The depiction as a homosexual is only a part of the wider criticism of the advertising industry for using dead celebrities for inept commercials. Displaying Lincoln as gay could therefore mean two things. Firstly, that the creators want to express the idea that the advertising industry is able to shape an image without any basis or secondly, as Lincoln does not seem to resist, they want to pay tribute to and fuel the ongoing discussion on both gay rights and the president's sexual orientation. It is verifiable that at the very least the discussion has been picked up by the gay community, as many blogs indicate (Lowder, Mast). Since the clip shows Lincoln and Washington getting married and ends with Lincoln and Homer walking together in heaven, I see both political (marriage) and religious (symbol of Heaven) references. Whereas Panhuis thinks that this is far from a political statement, I claim that this offers at least a potential of being considered a role model function for pro-gay activism. And as Panhuis states on his homepage, he observes a generally fair, intelligent, and entertaining dealing with homosexuality and a liberal view of gays and lesbians in the Simpsons, which leads me to the conclusion that Abraham Lincoln is used by the animated series to take a positive and liberal stand in the discussion—not least because he is depicted as friendly, non-violent, and well-adjusted.

#### Representative, Spokesperson, and Supporter

Beyond the various discussed representations of Abraham Lincoln that serve as a moral authority or critic on contemporary issues, there are also several examples of depictions acting in supportive ways in different contexts, such as promoting movements for gay rights or the

legalization of marijuana and backing subcultures. Furthermore, a large portion of these portrayals function to counsel “the common people” by giving advice and showing that even presidents face everyday problems, struggle, sometimes fail, or fall victim to bullying.

### Supporting Gay Rights

Animated Series, *American Dad!*, “Lincoln Lover”

I have identified two main representations of Abraham Lincoln in episode “Lincoln Lover” and claim that their overall function is to present the former president as a supporter of the gay community and fighter for equal rights. I bolster this assertion by referring to the fact that this episode was nominated for the GLADD Media Awards by “[t]he *Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation*, which recognize mainstream media for fair, accurate and inclusive representations of the gay, lesbian and transgendered community” (Kilday), in the category of outstanding individual episode.

The first encounter with Lincoln takes place when Stan’s wife Francine invites him to attend a play about the sixteenth president. Stan seems very happy as he holds his hand to his heart in full enjoyment and refers to Lincoln as “Ahh, Abe Lincoln. The first Republican. Pure and Perfect.” Even though Lincoln was not the founder of the Republican Party, Stan might refer to him as the most important one and expresses his admiration nonetheless. In the surreal theatrical performance, Lincoln is depicted half naked, alone on stage, throwing various pieces of meat around. After coming home, both Stan and his son deliver a damning indictment: “That was an abomination!” and “Lincoln has been assassinated in the theater twice!” Again, Stan’s reaction reveals his admiration of the sixteenth president. This bad performance eventually leads to Stan’s effort to write his own play “from the point of view of one of Lincoln’s greatest admirers” in order to restore the president’s reputation because he thinks that “people are desperate for a return to good old-fashioned conservative values”. The outcome is a play about Lincoln and his bodyguard, the latter played by Stan himself. The performances receive more and more attention and the viewer gets to know several sequences of the play, amongst them Lincoln—who is only a window mannequin-like puppet—sharing his bed with the bodyguard since Mary Todd is on a journey again, the bodyguard massaging his boss while chopping wood, and both writing the Gettysburg Address. I would like to

elaborate on these scenes a bit because I claim that we encounter three potential “disenchanted” aspects within these representations. The funny part arises from the result contrary to what was originally intended by Stan, i.e., presenting Lincoln in a proper light. First, the president is depicted at least with a propensity towards homosexuality. For instance, he repeatedly invites his bodyguard to sleep over when his wife is out of town and he enjoys receiving massages from his protector during hard work that he executes bare-chested. Second, Lincoln is potentially accused of creating a certain political image, in this case the one of a hard-working rail-splitter, to win the public’s support as the bodyguard states that the “log cabin will represent the strong roots of the Republican Party you founded, Mr. Lincoln.” Again, it is not historically accurate to claim that Lincoln founded the Republican Party, but I rather understood it as the writer’s attempt at exaggerating the discrepancy between Stan’s intention and the actual gay-friendly outcome of the scene. The third scene might lead the viewer to think that Lincoln was not as eloquent as historically delivered. By arguing “I think ‘fourscore’ sounds better than ‘80’. More... theatrical.” it is shown that it is the bodyguard who comes up with the idea of the opening of one of the most popular speeches by Lincoln—the Gettysburg Address. In other words, Lincoln might not have written his speeches by himself. This first part, in my view, has the function of both linking Stan’s admiration to the sixteenth president as his political role model and Abraham Lincoln’s affinity to minorities in general and the gay movement in particular.

Besides the theater play, there is a second direct encounter with the sixteenth president and it takes place towards the end of the cartoon, making up the climax and turning point of the storyline. After finding out that one does not choose to be gay, Stan goes to the Republican Convention and his son is glad to have him back fighting against the LCR. Steve has prepared anti-gay signs and as the Log Cabin Fraction arrive at the convention hall, he and his fellows block the way “to keep this convention pure”. At this moment, Stan is offered the chance of speaking on behalf of the Longley Republicans and as the viewer is excited about how he would decide to react, Stan takes a stand in his speech and makes it clear that being homosexual is not a choice, but being a Democrat is. And hence, he calls upon his fellow Republicans, saying that there “is room for everyone”, to unite in the fight against the political opponents:

My fellow Republicans, last night I kissed a man named Terry. Greg, you were on break at the time. And I learned something... We're wrong about gays. I was wrong... and I taught my boy wrong. It turns out that being gay is not a choice. It's true. Believe me, I tried, and it didn't work. The Log Cabin delegates trying to get in tonight didn't choose to be gay, but they did choose to be Republicans. Even though, as Republicans, we used bashing them as the backbone of our last presidential election, they're still sticking with us. By God, these people love America as much as they love brunch. You know what else is a choice? Being a Democrat. Democrats weren't born Democrats. They chose to be Democrats. . . There's room for everyone. We all belong in the GOP. . . The Grand Ol' Party just got grander. In the words of the Founding Father of the Republican party, Abraham Lincoln, 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' And that house, my friends, will be resurfaced with an aged-lime wash and flipped for a profit.

Stan makes use of a reference Abraham Lincoln made in a speech he delivered on June 16, 1858 upon accepting the nomination as the Illinois state senator<sup>169</sup>. Since Lincoln spoke of the danger of the South's aversion to emancipation and this spread of anti-slavery all over the U.S., I infer that the comparison between the divided United States of 1858 and the gay rights of then 2006 is made to express a fear that the anti-homosexual attitude of both Republicans and parts of the nation will win and spread through the United States. In and around 2006 a nationwide heated debate was going on about gay rights. For instance, in "the Lincoln State", the Illinois Human Rights Act came into effect on January 1, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation explicitly ("Illinois") and on a federal level, the "Federal Marriage Amendment", which would have limited marriage to one man with one woman, failed to pass both legislative houses ("Bill a", "Bill b"). Interestingly enough, one day after the show's premiere, eight U.S. states voted to prohibit same-sex marriage (Garvin), underlining the then topicality.

Therefore, I argue that the circle is closed to a statement Stan made earlier in the plot that "gays are the new blacks", using the image of Abraham Lincoln as the potential emancipator and liberator of another suppressed group. For this purpose, the "house" that stood for a divided nation under the question of slavery, will now be changed into a gay-friendly ("aged-

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<sup>169</sup> Even though phrase of "House Divided" from bible (Mark 3:25, Matthew 12:25), Stan openly refers to Lincoln.



lime wash”) environment that will help the Republicans to return to the advantage (“flip for profit”).

### Supporting Gay Rights

#### Music Video, *Electric Six*, “Gay Bar”

The video of Electric Six’s song “Gay Bar” starts with an establishing shot that places the setting in the White House, Washington, D.C., in 1863. Lincoln look-alikes are used to create imagery that invokes all kinds of gay stereotype and, furthermore, features various phallic images. Almost always, Abraham Lincoln is depicted scantily clad with leather hot pants or other provocative clothing; often his distinguishing marks are reduced to his beard and hat. For example, the sixteenth president is shown working out, receiving a beauty treatment in the bathtub, pole dancing (see appendix, fig. 26), posing in front of a mirror or besides a Greek statue, or just being surrounded by plush and tawdry furniture. In terms of phallic images, the viewer is exposed to a hamster running through a pipe, bananas and other fruits, a toy train entering a tunnel, a hammer, and one of the Lincolns licking a lollipop.

The way I see it, and I agree here with Alex Swadling, an analysis of this piece of music reveals a thin line between arrogance and parody (Harle). Even though the creators of the song have stated that it was one of their intentions to create something “nonsens[ical]” and “funny” (Laurence)—which would stand for an arrogant approach of playing on stereotypes for the sake of having fun and selling records—I nevertheless see certain functions of Lincoln’s representation as there indeed seem to be deliberately implemented elements of parody. Following this interpretation, those potential effects on the audience and their eventual interpretations especially become distinct when put in the context of the band’s knowledge of the aforementioned accusations of Lincoln himself being homosexual<sup>170</sup>. Hence, I consider this song and its musical video admittedly very provocative and the playing on gay stereotypes in general and using the sixteenth president particularly as the incarnation of it. However, and this has been pointed out by both band members and the gay community, the overdrawn perspective on homosexuals was rather not taken as an offense but eventually even resulted in becoming a song accepted by the gay community (LaCroix and Harris). This

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<sup>170</sup> “I think the video was done because of the rumour” in Harle.

allows me to work out several functions of Lincoln's representation. First, the singer did not deny the song's goal "to act against homophobic elements in the audience" (Laurence). Using the president as a gay representative consequently operates as a protective shield for the homosexual community. Further, a possible argumentation would be that the application of the well-known and respected figure Abraham Lincoln as a gay leader and icon (Zeiser) might be useful to draw attention to the discriminated social situation of homosexuals. It also bears the potential of conveying the opinion that Lincoln would have approved of a homosexual life. Additionally, and this has been pointed out by lead singer Dick Valentine, the song is also a criticism of the American people's attitude towards their presidents: "American culture is that we put so much on this one person as a representation of our country. They're expected to be almost superhuman" (Harle). In this case, the band makes use of Lincoln to draw awareness not only to gay rights but also to encourage society to reconsider the way they treat their political leaders; questioning whether they really should unload everything on them and, thus, indirectly call for a right of privacy.

#### Supporting the Legalization of Marijuana

##### TV Show, *Whitest Kids U Know*, "Civil War on Drugs"

Whereas the first two appearances of Abraham Lincoln in the cosmos of *Whitest Kids U Know* will be covered within chapter 4.3 as examples of a Demystified Lincoln, his third presence is characterized by the usage of his figure for a modern purpose, i.e., the demand for the legalization of marijuana. It takes place in the full-length movie "Civil War on Drugs" that was split up into ten episodes and shown in segments throughout season five of WKUK, dealing with two marijuana activists traveling to Washington D.C. to talk to President Lincoln, believing the ongoing American Civil War is about the legalization of weed. They eventually reach the capital in episode ten and to their surprise Abraham Lincoln tells them about the real reason for the war and that marijuana has been legal all the time.

I follow Newport by arguing that Abraham Lincoln is depicted as a very statesmanlike President with a modern touch and then consequently utilized as a contemporary spokesperson in favor of the legalization of marijuana and thereby referring to a very recent topic of 2011. His outer appearance (elegant suit, vest, stovepipe hat) and environment

(elegant wooden desk, flag in background, receptionist) as well as his sincere words of gratitude for winning the war towards the two soldiers let Lincoln appear, in my view, as a very strong and noble character. But on the contrary, right when the soldiers disclose the real purpose of their actions, Lincoln seems to turn into a modern character, saying that he cannot believe what is happening. But he is still interested in the reasons<sup>171</sup> for this total lack of knowledge, i.e. not knowing what the Civil War is about. This “modernization” serves as an opener for a depiction of Lincoln as a supporter and promoter for the “weed cause”. The way the activists and Lincoln argue leads me to infer that the movie tries to take advantage of both Lincoln’s popularity per se and the self-installed positive representation and use him as a figurehead for their pro-legalization attitude:

It’s a plant. It’s around. It’s in nature. Our forefathers left England to get away from oppressive law. This entire nation is founded on the idea of personal freedoms. . . Legal the whole time. Legal now. Always gonna be legal. This is the United States of America.

Abraham Lincoln alleges heroic reasons and works with pathos. He does not only get the founding fathers on board of his pro-marijuana boat but also bases his demand on the very basic principles of the United States of America—personal freedom. To my view, arguing with Abraham Lincoln, the founding fathers, and the American Constitution on one’s side makes an argument hardly attackable and has the potential of strengthening the producers’ call for legalization. Hence, Lincoln is depicted as a representative figure that defends the legalization of consuming marijuana with the basic principles of the United States of America, i.e. liberty concomitant with personal freedom, thus being used as a vehicle for a topical subject of 2011.

## Representing a Subculture: Hipster Lincoln

### *Internet Memes*

The third category of depictions in the world of Abraham Lincoln memes are those alluding to a hipster/old-school/cool image.

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<sup>171</sup> (asking the soldiers if it is the school system or home life)

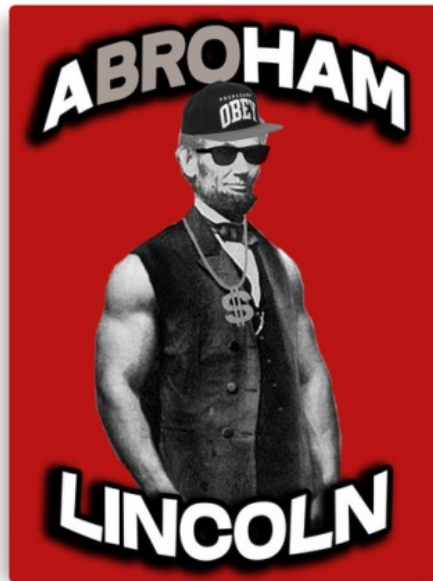


Fig. 10. “Abroham Lincoln“. Digital Picture. *Redbubble*. Redbubble.com. N.d. Web. March 2016.

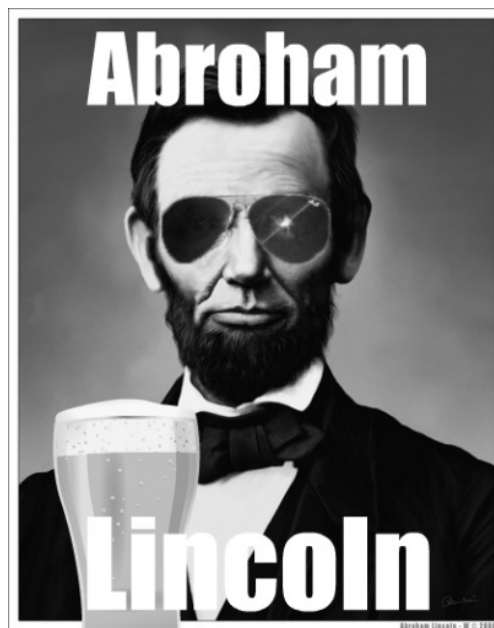


Fig.11. Baronvonawesome. “Abroham Lincoln”. Digital Picture. *Imgur*. Imgur.com, 2 June 2013. Web. March 2016.

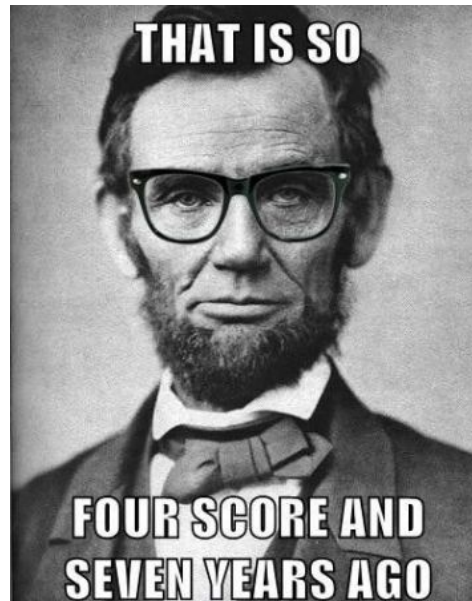


Fig. 12. Redneck-Yachtclub. "That Is So". Digital Image. *Tumblr*. Tumblr.com, 31 October 2012. Web. March 2015.



Fig. 13. Taylor, Caroline. "Boombox". Digital Picture. *Imgur*. Imgur.com, 2012. Web. March 2016.

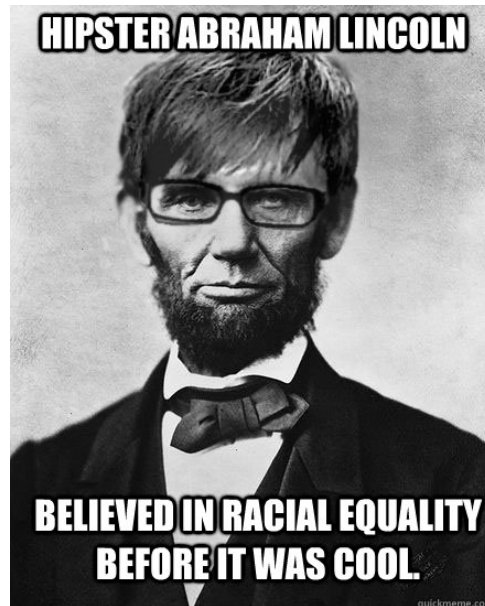


Fig. 14. “Hipster Abraham Lincoln”. Digital Picture. Quickmeme. Quickmeme.com. N.d. Web. March 2016.

All examples have in common that the nineteenth century president is linked with today’s fashion and lifestyle attitudes, such as being a party buddy or hipster. Although a personal appraisal of said styles is up to the individual, many real life examples exist indicating these popular trends of 2014/2015. The first two sample memes show “Abroham Lincoln” as a very cool guy, wearing sunglasses and a necklace or ready to enjoy a beer respectively. Arguably not scientifically recognized, the Urbandictionary defines “Abroham Lincoln” as “[s]omeone who emancipates a bro or bros from a party or bar to a better party or bar”, which qualifies today’s Lincoln as a person one would love to go partying with. I consider this a potential compliment of the younger generation which acknowledges Lincoln as one of theirs with this play-on-words. The difference in style (sleeveless vs. bow-tie) between the two presented pictures shows, to my mind, that party-goers of different backgrounds and social classes could identify with Lincoln as a one of their friends.

Example memes three, four, and five all depict Lincoln as a “hipster” figure. Part of Schiermer’s definition of it is the “redemption of the recent past” (174), which makes hipster culture a “conserver culture”. I claim that if Lincoln is connected to hipsterism, people must have found something in Lincoln that is worth preserving. Members of this subculture, and Schirmer is more precise by summing up the scholarly definition as “young, white and middle class” (170), seem to have taken the bearded president as their crowd-puller. Ironically, those

memes present the president as a trendsetter, which is partly contrary to scholarly definitions but, nevertheless, seem to reflect a common perception that hipsters' styles and attitudes encourages other to join, even though typical beards and lumberjack shirts are nothing new. What remains is that when hipster fashion and attributes are transferred to Lincoln, it indirectly says, at least I argue this way, that he would fit into this subculture and its members would be happy to have him as their kind. I would even go one step further and argue that Lincoln rather serves as an original hipster, the role model that today's generation tries to preserve by living his legacy, e.g., in terms of defending racial equality. As example meme number three shows, Lincoln is respected as a judging instance, that is to say what is trendy and what not, using his famous words from Gettysburg Address to underline its validity.

The presented selection reveals three broadly defined classes of memes. Various examples show Lincoln as a warning father figure criticizing vast misuse of quotes without calling them into question. Two memes depict an uber-president who fights in war-like scenarios using martial means, mirroring a stereotypical picture of *the* American commander-in-chief and implied wish for a strong leader. The last assembly of memes describe Lincoln as part of subcultures, having him as a spokesperson of trendy youth groups, such as hipsters or party people. All instances share a certain level of modeling on the former president and he seems still highly topical in regard to advising and speaking up to people of different backgrounds and preferences.

#### Shining on Others: Barack Obama

TV Show, *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, "Presidential Jeopardy"

Lincoln is represented as a sophisticated statesman with a humorous and "fly" attitude as a variety of topics are addressed. His style of dress perfectly matches the familiar one as he wears a stovepipe hat, beard, bow-tie, and a black coat and suite. He makes use of phrases such as "five score" instead of "a hundred", probably to underline his eloquence. However, president number sixteen still manages to get across in a "cool" and modern way. For example, he fist bumps with Obama, complains about his travels to the studio in slang ("that layover in Atlanta was a bitch"), or alleges that he met rapper 2pac in heaven (a possible sign that he gets along with African-Americans very well). He especially gets a laugh when

mocking himself, for example, the bearded president mentions the phrase “I’ll take a shot” or confesses that he has his bottom tattooed with the name of his wife “Mary Todd”. And he continues to bring up rather negative aspects. For instance, Lincoln mentions a probable bribery case (Answer to “Illinois Senate Seat” is “What did I [Lincoln] buy for 15 Dollars from Jedediah...”) and his marching orders for Commander Sherman to “burn” the City of Atlanta. Lincoln’s assassination is also thematized (Question to “He’s just not that into you” is “John Wilkes Booth”). Furthermore, the gay community is addressed by a coproduction of Lincoln and Obama (The answer “Mary Todd” does not correspond to Lincoln’s obvious questions “Who is my wife?” but rather to Obamas interrogation “What do guys want to do in San Francisco?”). Abraham Lincoln is able to win the competition by giving the final answer, thereby commenting on his relationship to his wife: the answer “789 billion” fits to his question “how many times did I tell my wife I did not want to go to the theater”.

To my view, the appearance of Lincoln’s character has the purpose of commemorating the sixteenth President of the United States and having his shine rubbing off on Barack Obama. Besides the above-mentioned date of the broadcast, Lincoln’s depiction as an eloquent, smart winner descending from heaven help indicate my view. Even without mentioning his arguably greatest achievements, saving the Union and emancipating the slaves, Lincoln nevertheless counts as a positive front man. Not only does he win the contest, but earns most of the laughs and, in my opinion, has the biggest potential of winning the audience’s favor as he tackles a great plurality of topics. By having him fist bumping with Obama, a strong connection is established and lets, as I see it, the current President benefit from his relationship to Lincoln.

#### The Counselor

Animated Series, *Adventure Time*, “Pilot Episode”

As previously mentioned, Abraham Lincoln’s first appearance takes place in the original pilot episode. Although it is a very swift one of roughly fifteen seconds, it nonetheless has a major impact on the main character Pen and the development of the storyline. After following *Lady Rainicorn*, half rainbow and half unicorn, Pen and Jack discover that *Princess Bubblegum* has been kidnapped and taken hostage by the *Ice King*. In his attempt to free the princess, the human protagonist is frozen by the antagonist and trapped in a huge ice cube. At this very



moment, President Lincoln appears in a surreal, dreamlike scene that shifts to Mars (see appendix, fig. 10):

Pen: “What’s going on? Ab...Abraham Lincoln?”

Lincoln: “Pen, your mind has been transported back in time... and to Mars.”

Pen: “What?”

Lincoln: “It doesn’t matter, but what does matter is you need to believe in yourself.”

Then, the scene switches back to the Ice Kingdom and Pen is able to free himself as he breaks out of his icy lockup and subsequently rescues the noble girl Bubblegum.

There are several reasons that lead me to think that Lincoln’s character is unexceptionally positively attributed in its debut in the world of Adventure Time. The first striking feature is his visual appearance. The accuracy of his facial features differs highly from the rather sketchy depiction of other characters, which potentially places him on a higher level. Lincoln is portrayed wearing his typical beard and bow-tie; however, the writers abstain from donning a hat on the president’s head. Instead, a halo-esque shining feature encircles his scruffy hair and makes him appear like a saint. Concerning his spoken words, to my view, I consider them a motivation to Pen and that they boost the boy’s self-esteem so much that he awakens some inner forces that enable him to break out of the ice—emancipating him in a way.

### The Counselor

Movie, *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (Scene 3 of 3)

Lincoln’s third appearance takes place towards the very end of the movie and is rather short. When pilot Earhaert agrees on flying Daley to New York, the marble President is shown leaning against one of the columns of his memorial and watching the airplane, saying “These are promising days indeed”. After having established Lincoln as such a positive character, a role model people can look up to, the last cameo fits in perfectly in terms of giving the audience security in uncertain times—as 2009 not only was the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth but also represents a time in the middle of a still developing worldwide financial crisis. By expressing that “these are promising days indeed”, Lincoln’s ultimate appearance is used to create a positive, reassuring prospect. And this positive attitude can potentially apply to all

kinds of crises and is in my understanding not limited to the then recent financial crisis. It might serve as a link to a general longing for a trustworthy political class and peaceful world.

### “Normal Guy” Lincoln: Teenager Problems

#### *Animated Series, Clone High*

*Clone High*’s Abe Lincoln<sup>172</sup> is a picture of a young, adolescent high school student—cloned from the DNA of the sixteenth President of the United States of America. Whereas Mark Harrison states that he is “in exactly the perpetually indecisive and nebbish mode that you don’t associate with the [original]” (Harrison), I state that Lincoln’s depiction picks up traits that are indeed not unheard-of—lanky and awkward in his body language; naïve and insecure in terms of personality. And not to forget, this is, if compared to the real Abraham Lincoln, an image of the young person—not the presidential one. However, I assert that his depiction is by no means offensive but rather serves to make his character approachable to the audience and install him as a normal person, similar to the example of *Drunk History*’s episode “Chicago”.

The official homepage appropriately describes Abe as the “tall, awkward, skinny kid you went to high school with” (“Characters”). He is furnished with rather typical Lincoln features such as first beginnings of his trademark beard (sideburns and an escalating goat beard), a mole on the right cheek, and a lanky stature (see appendix, fig. 27). In addition to that, he is equipped with over-sized shoes. His flared pants are probably due to the time setting of the series in the nineteen eighties. His way of moving matches his slightly awkward outer looks as he is depicted as not being capable of handling his height at all times; his body language is everything but statesman-like and might let the viewer speculate about a lack of self-confident just from looking at him—as it reflects his personality only too well.

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<sup>172</sup> In this analysis, I decided to only refer to the first three episodes since they most likely achieve to introduce and set characters for a new audience and due to the numerous amounts of popular artefacts that I want to investigate on.

On the subject of personality, he admires his clone father very much and has problems to fill his idol's footsteps<sup>173</sup>. Having a look at a poem by Abe, which is displayed on the official homepage of Clone High as a part of the fictional "The Clone High Tatler" school chronicle, allows me to gain insight into his self-conception.

"spelling"<sup>174</sup>

by abraham lincoln

A ngst

B asketball

R omantic

A good listener

H onest/ Height (a tie)

A miable

M odest

L iving up

I ntrospection

N ervous? A little

C onfusion

O bligation

L iar?

N ever.

To my view, this poem describes Abe Lincoln as a partly insecure person who has his heart in the right place. "Angst", "confusion", "introspection", "nervous"—all attributes potentially express a certain level of insecurity and shakiness. Furthermore, a characterization allotting him such positive attributes such as "romantic", "honest", "amiable", good-listener, and "modest", represent him as a just nice and likeable human being. Also, listing his hobby "basketball" makes it arguably even easier for the audience to identify with him as a "normal guy".

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<sup>173</sup> I a scene in episode two, Abe is shown hammering his head against a wall which is covered with portraits of his genetic father and Abe admits that it is hard for him to meet the standards of his idol.

<sup>174</sup> ("Clone High Backstage")

There are additional examples of the “normal guy” theme in the series as Abe has to experience and challenge typical teen issues, be it trying to get attention from an unanswered crush (with Cleo), fearing insecurities (for taking a political office), deciding between standing up for the right thing and thereby taking the risk of becoming unpopular or going with the mainstream (bringing beer to a party in episode 1, altering his students’ president campaign in episode 2, defending Ghandi when diagnosed with ADD in episode 3).

I infer the most important potential function from Lincoln’s aforementioned representation as a lanky “normal guy”. I argue that this theme might serve as an inspiring example for different groups of people and gives motivation for present and future times. First, Abe and his dealings with everyday problems might function as a role model for present teenagers, giving them ideas and inspiration on how to cope with juvenile troubles. Second, when taking the great achievements of the real Abraham Lincoln as an adult into consideration, Abe might also act as a bearer of hope for struggling high school kids, giving them optimism of what the future might bring and what still can become of them. Depicting Abe as a lanky, struggling person makes it potentially easier for the viewer to empathize and realize that every historical figure was once young and struggling himself. This also paves the way for letting Abe function as a role model for today’s politicians and people in general, representing him as an introspective (as he writes poems) person who is anxious to do the right thing. Placing macho JFK as Abe’s heavy opposite also exemplifies a different (political) approach of tackling problems. Though it is up to the audience to decide which way to follow, I argue that it is more likely to follow protagonist of the series: good-at-heart Abe.

#### “Normal Guy” Lincoln: Failing

Animated Series, *Venture Bros*, “Guess Who’s Coming to State Dinner?”

Abraham Lincoln was assigned a role in episode nine of season two “Guess Who’s Coming to State Dinner?”, which aired on September 10, 2006. In this adventure, Colonel Bud Manstrong becomes a national hero for killing terrorists with his spaceship. As a reward, he is invited for dinner at the White House and offered the position of Vice-President. The ghost of Abraham Lincoln takes notice of a blinking bandage on the Colonel’s neck and assumes a planned assassination of the President by the Colonel’s mother controlling the microchip.

Together with the Venture kids, Lincoln ghost tries to solve the suspected murderous plot. Lincoln's appearances in this twenty minute cartoon are multi-layered and occupy various references to real-life (popular) culture and are, therefore, eminently suitable to be investigated for potential functions of his character.

Lincoln's outward form as a ghost potentially alludes to the circulating legend about the sixteenth president still wandering the White House (Gage, Kiger, Coleman). Its manifestation still contains most of his stereotype features, such as the distinctive stovepipe hat, beard, bow-tie, and vest (see appendix, fig. 28). The first appearance of the specter version of the President—he emerges from a Lincoln painting during dinner when observing a blinking device implanted in the Colonel's neck from above—leads me to believe, at this point, that Lincoln sees his task in watching over and saving the other Presidents, a noble and guardian mission. On a side note, this first appearance is only witnessed by the Venture twins. Abraham Lincoln's second presence takes place in the Lincoln bedroom when the two kids are about to go sleep. During this scene, the viewer learns a lot more about the ghostly President and, at the same time, I can derive various possible functions of this character. As the ghost can only move objects in the material world that bear his image, the viewer might experience how omnipresent Lincoln still is in everyday life and especially in the White House, e.g., in the form of penny coins, five dollar bills, a miniature Lincoln Memorial, or paintings on the wall. As the ghost further explains, he needs a body to overcome his immateriality. In this context, two things are attached to the President. First, he tries to convince the boys to let him take over one of their bodies by bringing the cause of the Union into play<sup>175</sup>, reminding both kids and audience of his historical achievements. The fact that Dean quickly agrees is arguably another indication for Lincoln's trustworthiness. However, the scene then picks up the topic of Lincoln's alleged homosexuality since the first thing he does after taking over Dean's body is trying to kiss his brother. As a result, brother Hank slaps Dean so hard that Lincoln drops out of his host body and embarrassedly excuses himself for allowing his hormones to overwhelm him. Furthermore, it becomes evident in the course of the conversation between the three that Hank does not even really know who Lincoln is or,

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<sup>175</sup> "Dean, you seem to have a bit more on the ball here. Would you mind being able to help me? For the Union?"

even less, was. Yet Lincoln's desperate attempt at introducing himself as the "five dollar bill guy" fails and he is eventually even mistaken for "Uncle Sam".

After their first unsuccessful attempt to save the president and their subsequent return to their chamber, Lincoln reminisces about his times as a ghost and in this context speaks in high terms of Franklin D. Roosevelt. So here, Lincoln's positive image is used to let it shine on other historical figures. Furthermore, he addresses the current president—whose Texan accent in combination with the release date of 2006 makes a reference to George W. Bush plausible—by "this Breyer guy, though, he's the worst President I've ever seen". This time, Lincoln's positive image is used to make a negative valuation of someone. Having both evaluations in the scene gives Lincoln the potential function of making judgments and I infer from this that he is considered trustworthy and honorable enough to make such statements. Another interesting fact is how the latter, negative statement slightly alters his position: When being asked why they should be helping the current president then at all, the motif of Honest Abe comes into play and reveals that Lincoln tries to "earn his wings on this deal". This utterance comes with two outcomes, to my view. First, the noble character trait of being honest becomes apparent. But the fact that he admits a rather selfish purpose for saving the Bush-like head-of-state, also sort of decreases the amount of nobleness and might animate people to make a comparison between his deeds as a president and his acting as a ghost, which possibly leads to a conclusion that his achievements of the past answered various, not only noble, purposes.

But Lincoln and the twins do not give up and forge a second plan to rescue the current President. This time, ghost Lincoln is covered in five-dollar-bills to make him able to grasp things and he finally attacks the Colonel while shouting "here comes the railsplitter". This depiction as a daredevil and someone who sets his hand to a task, come along with a good portion of persistency. However, since the second plan is also not successful as the Colonel's crazy mother shoots Lincoln in the head making him unable to move. It is then revealed that the electronic device was no harm at all and the viewer gets to know that the Colonel was no hero at all but received sexual favors while smashing the spaceship. This leads to Lincoln not being able to pass the pearly gate as saving a "repressed masturbator isn't enough to get you into heaven these days."

After having elaborated on the various appearances of the immaterial version of the sixteenth president in this *Venture Bros.* episode and drawing several potential functions from it, I come to the conclusion that I disagree with Screenwriter Todd Alcott who states in his blog that Abraham Lincoln “steps forward as a true hero”. Granted, it has been outlined that Lincoln is potentially represented as a daring guardian ghost, who, on the face of it, acts on the basis of noble sentiments. However, and this lets me object to Alcott’s assessment, Lincoln is not a true hero—even though its definition might vary anyhow—as I see neither any self- or social sacrifice for the greater good nor any form of moral excellence (Franco et al., 99ff.), features President Lincoln is often associated with. On the contrary, he rather occupies a tragic role as I see a possibility for the audience to feel nuances of pity and to experience suffering, for instance in connection with his limited abilities, his wrong accusation, and having been captured as a ghost for decades. However, I have enlisted further construable positive references, such as the motifs of honesty or persistence, which back my argument of a multi-layered portrait of the sixteenth president. Another striking usage of Lincoln is his installation as a point of reference to put different subjects into perspective. First, he acts as a judge himself by praising Roosevelt and lashing out at Bush. This judging could be expanded to the estimation that Lincoln is so tired of modern politics, having witnessed numerous state dinners and conversations, that he just wants to leave the White House—a place that arguably symbolizes American politics like no other. Second, one of the twins is depicted as completely brainless because he does not even know Lincoln, despite the fact that he sleeps in the Lincoln bedroom, placed a statue of him on the table, and arguably uses five-dollar-bills on a daily basis. Lastly, there have also been references to subjects that have been at least tackled in public discussion, e.g., his homosexuality. Overall, I see Lincoln’s representation as an example of multifacetedness confirmed. Besides its intrinsic role of being of comic effect the author’s general motif of failure is also mirrored in Lincoln, which makes him receptive to empathy on the part of the audience or, to put it in other words, brings him close to the common people.

“Normal Guy” Lincoln: Bullying

Animated Series, *South Park*, “The List”

The episode “The List” deals with the protagonist boys finding out that the fourth-grade girls made a list that ordered the male class members according to their cuteness. After successfully stealing the list, the disclosure of the voting has an immense impact on the boys’ lives. Some gain confidence and turn out to bully lower voted kids, others become very sad. Especially Kyle, who was voted ugliest, is emotionally offended and ends up hanging around with other outsiders. Just when Kyle is thinking of burning down the school, the South Park version of Abraham Lincoln comes into play and tries to convince Kyle by taking him on a ride around town, showing him, using different people as examples, that ugliness can be a blessing because they have nothing handed to them and develop character (see appendix, fig. 29). These efforts at persuasion are not successful at first as Kyle is still pursuing his plans of an attack. Luckily, the other boys find out about the fakeness of the list. It was manipulated by some of the girls in order to become friends with top-ranked Clyde, whose father owns a shoe store that the girls want to profit from. Towards the ending, Kyle decides to burn the original list without reading it and refers back to Lincoln’s words of wisdom.

According to [imdb.com](http://imdb.com), there is an alternative ending available that reveals that Eric is on the bottom of the list. However, I see this alternative version as not relevant for my thesis since it has arguably reached far fewer potential viewers and, thus, might be less likely to be stumbled upon.

Lincoln’s outward appearance amounts to a sort of apparition, a ghostlike guise that is mixed with presidential attitude. Besides his typical outfit—including trademark stovepipe hat, beard, bow tie, and elegant suit—his whole body is encircled with a glow and his voice is reinforced by an echo effect. Additionally, his first appearance is accompanied by presidential drums and a heavenly note is played when Lincoln and Kyle are visiting the neighborhood.

Ghost Lincoln turns up at a very crucial point of the storyline as Kyle is very depressed and thinking of committing a crime in sheer despair. The President addresses the fourth-grader directly by urging: “Do not burn down the school, Kyle” and then later continues:



I am Abraham Lincoln. Burning down the school will not solve your problems. You think you've been cheated because you are ugly, but I am here to show you otherwise. Come! There is much to see. *walks out*

I want you to look in here. *They approach a random house and look inside. A bored woman is playing with a pencil and pebble at her small dining table.*

This woman is Nancy Pinkerton. As a child she was consistently the most beautiful girl in her entire school. Her life as a youth was filled with praises, and everything being handed to her. Boys told her she was special. She was funny. She was interesting. But that's only because she was hot. It wasn't until she reached age 40, when her looks started to fade, that she learned she was actually about as interesting and special, as a wet carrot. *They leave her as they found her, playing with a pencil, all alone in her dining room. They move on to the next house.*

This is the home of your new ugly friend, Yamal. *Yamal is shown playing a piano.* Because he's ugly, he gets nothing handed to him. He has to work at making something of himself. But that work is gonna pay off when he's an adult. He will have character, something that kids who are hot rarely develop. Like your classmate, Clyde. *They approach Clyde's house. Clyde is all cool laying on his couch talking to someone on the phone.*

Now that he knows he's good-looking, he doesn't have to make any effort to be special. (“The List/Script”)

Later on, he appeals to Kyle’s patience—though unsuccessfully for the time being.

The presence of Abraham Lincoln in this very South Park episode possesses several potential features of characterization which in turn allow inferences about its functionalization. Firstly, the decision to have the former President as a ghost makes him appear, at least in my opinion, majestically floating above all things in a sublime and literally elevated way. Secondly, Kyle—a young kid attending fourth grade—instantly recognizes Lincoln, which mirrors the President’s high profile in the South Park community. Furthermore, both examples let the audience, in my view, identify with Lincoln as a person commanding respect. Thirdly, and most importantly, Abraham Lincoln is once more depicted as an eloquent and tactically skilled convincer, even though he does not seem to be successful at first sight. Not only is he able to set the right tone while addressing a child by using

juvenile language (“Clyde is all cool laying on his couch” or “because she was hot “), he also does not only command and demand and top-down but wants Kyle to understand by illustrating his assumption with various examples. The fact that the young character is not impressed by Lincoln’s demonstration at first and does not want to wait to be an adult could possibly serve as a comparison to Lincoln’s achievements whose repercussion and impact may not have been conceivable back in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The appearance of Lincoln conveys two main messages. First, the President communicates that violence should never be an option. Second, by constructing a linkage of the kids’ level of ugliness with their development of character and skills (Yamal) in contrast to the cute kids’ lack of those (Nancy, Clyde), he shows that people will benefit from being “different” in younger days. As displayed, Lincoln is depicted as a role model—someone who despite his outer looks achieved greatness—and is thus constructed as a credible bearer of this life perspective. Since Kyle decides to burn the list at the very end without having read it (“I’m sure. Abe Lincoln was right: I don’t wanna find out I’m good-looking and become a total shithead when I grow up.”), I assume that he fully accepted Lincoln’s wise words, which in turn are likely to be adopted by the audience.

“Normal Guy” Lincoln: Bullying

TV Show, *Drunk History* “Chicago”:

While I categorized Lincoln’s first appearance in *Drunk History* as an example of a glorified president, I see his second one to be of a re-invented nature as its main purpose is to comment on the recent topic of bullying and, furthermore, making a statement that hard work pays off.

The plot deals with lawyer Lincoln at times before his presidency and recounts how he was mocked by other attorneys and how he takes motivation and vigor from it to eventually become the leader of the United States of America. Lincoln is called in as a local lawyer when three attorneys from Philadelphia are commissioned with a legal case about patent laws. When the Philadelphian delegation meets the young jurist, they look at him in disgust due to his outer appearance. As the case is moved from Chicago to Cincinnati, young Lincoln is not needed anymore. But since he is not told, he still works hard on the case. According to Fulcher, once the Chicago resident finds out, he goes to Cincinnati as well and upon arrival,

the storyteller describes the encounter of Lincoln and his colleagues firing a volley of expletives at him in full detail:

Oh my God, this guy is a lanky, gorky, awkward, ape-legged, ape-armed man. This guy is weird. This guy is like an ape. He's got ape arms. He's got like ape awkward arms. This guy is like an ape awkward guy . . . like an ape-man.

However, Abraham Lincoln decided to stay—even without being acknowledged by his coworkers. Fulcher cites Lincoln “I know what I need to do now I’m gonna study my ass off.” Fulcher also mentions that after becoming president, Lincoln still appointed one of the co-lawyers Secretary of War and that his minister was the one to utter the popular sentence upon Lincoln’s death “Now he belongs to the ages”.

Lincoln is impersonated by actor Eric Filipowksi who, arguably trying to match the story about an outsider, portrays him in a ridiculous way. In contrast to most of the other depictions within this thesis, not much effort has been put to equip the actor with multi Lincoln-esque features. His face is not altered or made up in any way and does not show any resemblance. In the establishing shots, Lincoln wears just a bow-tie and is even made fun of by the other attorneys because he does not wear a vest (see appendix, fig. 30). To my mind, this representation has one advantage and mirrors the authors’ intention of humanizing historical figures and “making things relatable” (Zemler). In this case, Lincoln is more than ever shown as a human, flavored with a bit of awkwardness and everyday problems of the common people, e.g., being bullied at work and feeling left outside. This is what Waters describes as “we have to remember where [historical figures] started. Even [they] were just like us” (Goldstein). Fulcher’s account of the bullying Lincoln had to experience takes up a comparatively large part of the plot, probably partly caused to his drunkenness. However, his interpretation of the harassing comes out as a ridicule of itself, intended or not, and especially in combination with the positive outcome of Lincoln’s career, this potentially serves as an incentive for victims. They are shown that even Lincoln had to go through tough times. In the course of events, it is shown that he overcame this misery by putting much effort into his work and sharpening his skills—in my interpretation an allusion to the American Dream and the idea that great things are available for everyone who works hard. The storyteller then makes a jump to a time when Lincoln was already president and his depiction changes accordingly. From that moment on, the commander-in-chief wears a beard and a suit, giving

him a statesmanlike posture. Corresponding, the narrator emphasizes a move by Lincoln, which I would describe as both excellent in terms of political competence and sense of responsibility towards his citizens. As the president appoints one of his former foes Secretary of War, narrator Fulcher indicates that Lincoln stands above personal differences and interprets his political office as too important as to have time to seek personal revenge. Also, the mentioning of the story leads me to assume that Fulcher tries to commend Abraham Lincoln's leadership skills as this incident serves as an example of Lincoln's attitude of destroying one's enemies by making them friends (Greene and Elffers 12), taking from their ability to harm because they are either controlled by or dependent on him. In either case, this stroke is, in my view, another positive connotation that is made and this positivity is underlined by the narrator's closing remarks "how cool is that".

Since the selection of the story happens in sober condition, I claim that the role of an outsider was chosen deliberately. Lincoln is humanized, made touchable and easy to empathize with as today's people can see that his way to presidency was of trial and tribulation and that he had to overcome oppositions of many kinds. Showing where Lincoln started and knowing about his eventual success gives potential of serving as a motivation leader and role model and as an example of the American Dream, where hard work and consistency pay off. Furthermore, aspects of Lincoln's political tactical brilliancy are brought forward as he is shown as a cleverly acting president.

#### 4.3 The Demystified Lincoln: Object of Ridicule and Deconstruction

As previously outlined, the category of a demystified Lincoln includes negatively charged representations and covers depictions criticizing his person, actions, or habits. Amongst them I have found scorn for particular political actions such as his warfare and resulting consequences for the South; blatant mockery of his character; imputations of mental disorders or alcoholism; or simple insults of his physical appearance.

Criticizing Lincoln's Political Actions: Southern View on Emancipation  
TV Show, *Saturday Night Live*, "Louis C.K.'s Lincoln"

The sketch sequence starts with the first of two scenes that take place in a tavern. Lincoln joins an already present black person at the bar counter, orders a coffee and awkwardly tries to start a conversation. The black person is reading his newspaper and is obviously not interested in a small talk as he only answers very briefly, keeping his eyes on the papers. Lincoln tries to direct the topic to emancipation, fishing for a compliment so to say, and asks the man how he is doing after being emancipated. After not receiving the desired credit, Lincoln tries to introduce himself only to be exposed by the black man in front of the whole bar:

Freedman Jones: [ standing ] Hey! Everybody? Hey! I just want to thank --

Abraham Lincoln: No, no...

Freedman Jones: President Lincoln here for, uh... for everything that he's done for me!  
Especially my NEW job -- of shoveling HORSE SHIT... into a wagon!

[ Lincoln appears stung ]

Freedman Jones: [ sitting ] Is that what you want?

Abraham Lincoln: I-I just don't... I don't have any...

Freedman Jones: You don't have any...?

Abraham Lincoln: Black friends.

Freedman Jones: [ to the bartender, as he stands to leave ] He's gonna pay for this. [ to Lincoln ] Hard to be you!

In this short scene, Lincoln is being criticized and made fun of in at least two ways. Firstly, the freedman argues that he does not feel any better, if not even worse, after emancipation now that he has to shovel horse "shit" into a wagon. Secondly, and this carries on the preceding thought, Lincoln's claiming that he still does not have any black friends, makes me infer that he is not only being loved by the emancipated people but also finds opposing voices whose situation does not seem to have improved. Obviously this awkward attempt at socializing with a freedman is unsuccessful again. As the black person gets up and leaves the

president alone—even asking his political leader to pay for his drink and pitying Lincoln by saying that it must be hard to be himself—the audience basically witnesses a harsh insult and criticism of the sixteenth president. Furthermore, I would like to expand a bit on what the freedman utters while he is leaving the tavern. According to my opinion, “he's gonna pay for this” is of ambiguous meaning. First, it can refer to the actual scene when the freedman leaves the tavern without paying for his drink and has Lincoln pick up the bill. Secondly and more to the point, it refers to the upcoming assassination and might be rephrased along the lines of “you are going to pay the price for having emancipated the slaves and being proud of it”.

Even if this skit is supposed to be a mocking of Louis C.K. himself in the first place, the first showing took place a few days before the presidential elections of 2012 and right before the movie premiere of “Lincoln” and therefore vindicates my choice by offering a strong connection. Leaving Lincoln only partly in historical context (after emancipation but still not murdered), and putting him in the Louie-like setting of modern New York (with subway and Comedy Cellar), is another proof of a popular means since the original subject is enriched with different surrounding. According to my argumentation, it is not important if the main focus is on Louis CK, the portrayed characteristics of the figure of Lincoln/Louie rubs off on both characters and provides a suitable study subject of the sixteenth president.

The bar scene is followed by the opening credits in which the borrowing from his original show Louie finds complete expression. The course is exactly the same, only three changes occur: the character Louie is replaced by Lincoln, the opening credits reveal that Lincoln has taken over all action (editing, starring, writing teleplay), and the title song’s lyrics of “Louie, Louie, Louie” are replaced by “Lincoln, Lincoln, Lincoln”. Just as Louie, Lincoln is seen climbing the stairs from a subway station (see appendix, fig 3.), eating a slice of pizza in a nearby pizza shop—including the infamous middle finger (Toder)—and walking to his destination, the Comedy Cellar. The introduction sequence serves as a typical and perfect example of what popular media is about. The same original scene has been adopted by various amateurs and a number of remakes, sometimes varied, can be found on YouTube and other internet video platforms. The fact that Lincoln occupies probably all possible references—including the lyrics of title song, all credits, and being the main character that is filmed the whole time—is not weakened by the excuse that the same applies to Louie in the original introductory sequence. By laying everything in Lincoln’s hands, one could argue that

the president shall be illustrated as a multifaceted talent. Also, since he is shown in everyday and present day situations, a connection is drawn between the historical figure and a contemporary setting, with all its recent connections and scope.

Up next is a segment where Lincoln is shown on stage, performing a stand-up routine. Using modern English slang, he brings up the topic of slavery and his personal feelings while arguing with slave owners.

The one thing I'm really tired of...is...arguing with slave owners about slavery. As if they're not just fucking assholes! Like that's realllly hard. And they're like, 'Oh! But I like owning people!' 'Yeah, no, no... I get it. I totally get that.' Like you gotta act like you're kinda cool with it. 'No, look—if I could own a couple of dudes, I'd *love* to own a couple of dudes! I totally get it.' You gotta act like this is... like a 50-50 issue. You know, I just kinda think... that owning a person... is NOT cool, you stupid dick! ("Season 38")

This sketch contains strong language ("fucking assholes", "stupid dick") and thus provides the scenery and his line of argumentation, in my view, authenticity, even though it might be due to the audience's expectations. On the one hand, the chosen language register demonstrates a departure from highly rhetorical skills Lincoln has been connected with in other media, but on the other hand it is still coherent with the tactics that were portrayed in the discussion about "Lincoln". To my understanding, Louie's version of President Lincoln is also totally averse to slavery, as the viewer infers from his thinking that "owning a person is not cool" and his statement that you have to act as if you are in favor of slavery. However, he implicitly argues that he does not tell his discussion partner about his inner feelings and thus corresponds with the tactics displayed in the movie, i.e., being aware of the difference in the wish about one's opinion and the realistic assessment of how adequate a statement would be in a certain situation. If Lincoln was not involved here and only Louis on stage, I would have inferred to it as a potential critique of people not brave enough to utter their opinion. And arguably this is what the viewer thinks about the Louis part of this skit.

The next fragment begins with a very quick and overlapping cut—just slightly before Lincoln finishes saying "stupid dick" on stage—to a scene in the private chambers of the White House, where both Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln are getting ready for a theater attendance.

Mary Todd Lincoln (MTL): Do you have the tickets?

Abraham Lincoln (AL): Yeah, I have the tickets.

MTL: Okay. Well, don't just "Yeah, I have the tickets." Like, I don't want to show up and then not have the tickets.

AL: I HAVE them! I mean, they're gonna let us in. It's fine.

MTL: Okay. Well... I'm just saying, I don't want to get there, and then they just won't let us in without a ticket...

AL: They'll let us in! They'll let us in! I'm the PRESIDENT!

MTL: Oh. Okay. So, then, they'll just give you special treatment because you're "The President." Like, when does it stop, you know?

AL: It stops AT the President! Okay? If you're the President -- or higher -- you get in stuff, tickets or not! Everybody else, no; me, yes! ("Season 38")

In this sequence, the atmosphere is suggestive of existing tension. Lincoln argues with his demanding wife Mary Todd and she seems to drive him mad, which I gather from his gestures and both tone and volume of his voice. For other couples, a conflict about theater tickets might be a topic of random choice and could stand for all the small everyday battles within a relationship, but combining Lincoln with a visit to the theater intrinsically links the scene with his upcoming death, as I assume all the viewers know about his assassination in Ford Theater. Hence, in a figurative sense, I argue his wife pushes him to death—again insinuating on Lincoln's assassination. Furthermore, and this parallels the motion picture "Lincoln", the president's relationship to his wife is illustrated as complicated and nerve-racking. Additionally, the conversation is about getting special treatment as a president. In this case, Lincoln is indirectly accused of making use of it on a regular basis.

As a next step, the audience is taken back on stage where President Lincoln continues his stand-up routine. Now that his wife has been introduced, he picks out her, and his prophecy of getting murdered as the central themes:

I'm married now. My wife is, uh... is crazy. Literally... historically insane. One thing I'm really sure of... is that somebody's gonna murder me. I just KNOW... I'm totally getting murdered! This is not even a question. Like when they murder me—whoever murders



me—when I get murdered... it's just gonna say: 'It Happened!' And you're just gonna know what 'It' is. And then, I don't... you know who I feel bad for? The detective who has to try to solve my murder. Because they're gonna go, 'Let's see, who might... who might have done it? Oh, I don't know -- everybody from the middle of the country down? Maybe they... maybe one of them did it.' Maybe they had a motive, like I ruined the way they do EVERYTHING? ("Season 38")

This part, which only lasts roughly a minute, plays with Lincoln's clairvoyant abilities in a way as the historical outcome of his two prophecies was positive—his wife becoming “literally...historical insane”<sup>176</sup> and he “totally getting murdered”. The reasons stay the same and the South's hate is cited as a reason (“Maybe they [the South] had a motive, like I ruined the way they do everything”). This consideration and thematization of the Southerner's desire for revenge was not highlighted too extensively in the movie *Lincoln*. The president's assassination is not directly shown and the focus is on showing Lincoln giving Grant the order not to be too harsh after the end of the war. This piece of comedy, however, enlightens the potential hate of the South a bit more—therefore amplifying the thoughts of the Southern delegation when negotiating peace in “*Lincoln*”—that the president basically destroyed a major part of what the Southern life and economy was based on. Louis CK's *Lincoln*, therefore, rather alludes to the motif of “*The Conspirator*” that elaborates on the South's animosity and describing the whole plot of murdering the president.

The whole Louis/*Lincoln* part closes with a return to the tavern/bar from the first sketch as a sort of encore since the closing title already shows “created by Abraham Lincoln”—again potentially referring to the president's all-round talents—and presents the supporting roles Mary Todd Lincoln, Freedman Jones, etc. This time again, Lincoln awkwardly tries to socialize with another black guest, thereby using the phrase “Hey, uh...it's cold, huh?” to start the conversation. His failure becomes immediately apparent as he receives a rude answer from his envisaged conversation partner: “Hey, so no one's SHOT you yet?” Once more, this sequence also mentions the upcoming death of the president and repeats the non-agreement by a black, enslaved, person. Lincoln himself puts himself in an even more inferior position

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<sup>176</sup> Whereas there are different opinions on whether Mary Todd Lincoln was insane or not, it is a historic fact that she was sent into an asylum in 1875. (Emerson 2007, 53ff.)

when answering "No. no, not yet", leaving him as a sad man without self-esteem (looking embarrassed in his empty coffee mug) at the counter.

According to SNL's official homepage on [screen.yahoo.com](http://screen.yahoo.com), the Lincoln skit was written by Seth Meyers—at that time head writer of Saturday Night Live. As argued, even if this part of SNL was mainly intended to parody of the show "Louis" on FX, it has provided me with various depictions of the president nevertheless. Interestingly enough, Meyers adopted a nice detail of the original opening titles by inheriting the infamous finger flip ("Louis"). As stated on [funnyordie.com](http://funnyordie.com), Louis CK looks at the finger incident as a sign from God. Adopting the "middle-finger" to the Lincoln opening sequence, hence, shows Lincoln's potential for also attracting criticism and disapproval. And his general beleaguered depiction implies, in my opinion, the major point of criticism that he made many people at least discontented. Additionally, it highlights some of his negative character traits, such as craving for recognition and advantage seeking, on which more praising movies like "Lincoln" did not focus. All in all, President Lincoln is portrayed in a rather ridiculous way and therefore offers potential for being mocked or criticized by the audience as well.

#### Criticizing Lincoln's Political Actions: Southern View on Emancipation

Animated Series, *Family Guy*, "The Man with Two Brians"

In the fifth episode of season seven, "The Man with Two Brians", Abraham Lincoln has a short cameo. In the course of the episode, Peter Griffin realizes that his dog Brian is getting old and is not so resilient and funny anymore, so the father decides to introduce a new dog to the family—"New Brian". When "old" Brian starts complaining, Peter counters with a comparison: "Trust me, you guys [both Brians] are gonna get along better than Abraham Lincoln and his neighbor" and the scene cuts to a cutaway gag where the sixteenth president appears.

Lincoln steps out of his log-cabin styled house to fetch the newspaper that is lying on the doorway of his properly maintained dooryard. He then turns to his right, where his neighbor Dale is raking the rather high lawn in his front yard (see appendix, fig. 31). Lincoln starts the conversation:

Lincoln: “Hey, Dale. I've noticed lawn's getting a little high.”

Dale: “Yeah, I used to have a guy for that. Dick!”

Lincoln: “Okay now, you have a good one.”

In this short cameo, Lincoln is depicted in his typical style with beard and hat. Nevertheless, I assume that he is not president anymore since he seems to live a normal life in a wooden house. Here, a reference to the president's family home is made<sup>177</sup>, probably in order to underline the depiction of an established man. However, as his relationship to his neighbor reveals, not everyone is happy with the outcome of Lincoln having abolished slavery. Hence, this scene is taken as an illustration of not getting along very well and I argue that Lincoln's overall representation is rather negative. Even though Abraham Lincoln tries to be nice towards the end by wishing his neighbor a good day after being insulted, the (former) president shows bourgeois features as he grouches about the height of the lawn and above all he is taken as a model for bad relational behavior.

#### Post-War Prospects (partly positive)

##### Animated Series, *Robot Chicken*, “Bionic Cow”

Lincoln's second appearance in the *Robot Chicken* series takes place in the episode “Bionic Cow”. In the fifteen second fragment “Lincoln Gets a Good Ass-Kicking In”, the commander-in-chief is—supposedly on the battlefield of Gettysburg as the landscape and two canons indicate—repeatedly kicking General Lee between his legs while two Union soldiers hold the General of the Confederacy. While booting, Lincoln keeps count of his hits and after reaching twenty he explains that this is equal to “one score”. While the soldiers applaud the president, Lee tries to stagger away from the scene but Lincoln makes sure the general gets back to his place to receive even more kicks:

Getting a good ass kicking in here. Hey Robert E. Lee, where do you think you're going?

We still have 3 score and 7 kicks to the balls to go! (own)

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<sup>177</sup> For more information refer to *The Lincoln Log Cabin Foundation* at [lincolnlogcabin.org](http://lincolnlogcabin.org).

Apart from the battleground setting and the two uniformed main characters, the special way of counting serves as an allusion to Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address respectively.<sup>178</sup> Lincoln is depicted as ruthless and rather vengeful as he kicks Lee while two fellow Unionists are holding his rival. This represents the extreme opposite from what Lincoln seemed to officially stand for, as he, for example, called for “malice toward none [and] charity for all” in his second inaugural address. The whole scene is set in a different tone from the first encounter with Lincoln. It might serve as to link Lincoln with the many atrocities of the Civil War, possibly making him—as commander-in-chief—indirectly responsible for these deeds. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted in a moderate positive way since Lincoln, as the highest ranked officer, does not consider himself too good for going out on the battlefield and defending the Union with his own hands and feet—acting like a daredevil president that takes action in his own hands, so to say. Hence, I argue that in this case it especially comes down on how the viewer has viewed Lincoln before and this will divert him or her to a direction of interpretation. Something I consider a general interpretation is that by making use of Lincoln’s specific manner of counting, attention is drawn to this special use of language that is so closely linked to the sixteenth president nowadays. Here, the comparison to homage seems not too far-fetched. As with many other examples, if argued that Lincoln’s behavior in this segment is so far from reality, it could also be understood that his role here mostly serves as to produce some good laughs.

Altogether, it has been shown that the different representations of President Lincoln in the world of Robot Chicken hold several potential functions. For instance, his depiction helps cast a poor light on George W. Bush and at the same time serves as a role model for modern politicians. Furthermore, the action-packed setting holds the potential for making Lincoln attractive to a younger audience. On the other hand, it might very well be possible to take a step back from the very positive interpretation and by looking at the “kick ass” segment in particular, come to the conclusion that it should not be denied that the Civil War was a cruel period, with Lincoln partly being responsible for it. However, since his portrayal could also be regarded as overly exaggerated, I construe that the negative connotations dominate.

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<sup>178</sup> With its famous first line “four score and seven years ago” compared to modern “eighty-seven years ago”.

## Criticizing War

Animated Series, *The Simpsons*, “G.I. D’oh”

“G.I. D’oh” is the fifth episode from season eighteen and was first aired on November 12, 2006. The main plot is about Homer taking Bart’s place in the army because his son agreed to join the armed forces when recruiters visited his school. The father of the Simpson family behaves stupidly, enrages the colonel, and eventually flees with his unit to Springfield where a manhunt takes place all through the town.

The yellow version of Abraham Lincoln appears in a promotional video of the US army, which is presented by the previously mentioned recruits in the assembly hall of the school. In this video, the tasks and experiences of the army are represented in a highly exaggerated and unrealistic way. For instance, soldiers fight on foreign planets, a soldier grows out of a golden sword, a robot knight changes into a helicopter from which the soldier shoots Adolf Hitler, Bin Laden, and even a “deadly hurricane”. After the air vehicle lands on an openair stage in a fully packed stadium, the soldiers jump out with guitars in their hands and perform some rock music. This is when Abraham Lincoln steps in. Along with a Simpson version of George Washington, they step in and enrich the rock star performance (see appendix, fig 32). In contrast to the nation’s first president and all the soldiers, Lincoln does not play the guitar but swings the tambourine. Towards the end, all the kids clap their hands and everyone seems to fill in the navy enrollment forms, including Bart.

At the first glance, Lincoln’s representation seems to fit his oft-repeated role of a glorified role model. He literally supports the seemingly undefeatable troops, is depicted as a rock star, and young kids seem to look up to him as a representative of the army. However, on second sight and seen in the broader context of the whole episode, the overall image of the army is derogative. For instance, taking the recruiters’ statement into consideration that they would save the kids “a spot in America’s next unsolvable conflict!” or looking at the sign on the door on the recruitment shop that says “suicidal teens welcome”, opens a new angle of vision on the army and, as a consequence thereof, Lincoln’s illustration. I understand this version of a promotional spot as a critique not only of the recruitment tactics of the armed forces—baiting children on the basis of false promises speaks for itself—but also of a general criticism on recent wars, with founding father George Washington and his later successor Abraham Lincoln acting as representatives of wars as well—be it the War of Independence or Civil War

respectively. Since Lincoln plays the tambourine, an instrument dictating the rhythm, I see him potentially assigned with a forerunner role of sending young soldiers to death. However, one could also argue that, as shown in other circumstances, Lincoln's image is only misused and adopted by today's army and, thus, focuses the criticism solely on the modern US military for luring way too many citizens into hopeless combat by abusing heroic images of US history.

Although the demystifying view of Lincoln as a supporter of the alarmingly recruiting methods raised here is disputable, it is at any rate conceivable. Thus, it can be stated that, either way, the representation of the sixteenth president at least potentially serves the purpose of levelling comprehensive criticism at the US army and Lincoln in person.

#### Mocking on Lincoln's Character: Nerve-Wrecking

TV Show, *Whitest Kids U Know*, "Abe Lincoln" and "John Wilkes Booth"

Besides the already examined appearance of Abraham Lincoln in the comedy series of *Whitest Kids U Know* that has him call for the legalization of weed, thus being part of the section of the Re-Invented Lincoln, his other two roles in the show are assignable to the category of a demystified president since both depictions excoriate the Kentucky-born statesman.

The first sketch involving Lincoln in WKUK's TV show took place in the very first episode ever and was called "Abe Lincoln". Loosely based on a *Saturday Night Live* performance of 1983 (Cornfield), WKUK reveal "what has actually happened"<sup>179</sup> at Ford Theater at the night of Lincoln's assassination from their point of view. The sixteenth president is depicted as a rioting, obnoxious heckler who loudly disturbs the performance of Shakespeare's *Othello* numerous times in such an obscene manner that eventually an audience member (arguably John Wilkes Booth) feels so provoked that he goes upstairs and kills Lincoln by hammering him "in the ass". In addition to the show's regular airings and releases on DVD, there are several copies in circulation on YouTube. The two most watched ones combine for a total of 16 m viewers, which supports the previously alleged popularity of the show. Also, all three

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<sup>179</sup> In an epilog, the actors explain the sketch, stating that historians thought it was too embarrassing to let the nation know about the truth.

main actors claim this sketch to be one of their favorites and state this in several interviews<sup>180</sup>. This makes the sketch, in my opinion, even more interesting for people who have not watched the show or episode yet.

Lincoln's depicted behavior can be summarized as enormously offensive and contemptuous. Sitting elevated in the President's box, he does not care about others--i.e. his entrusted people--disturbs and ruins the play by trying to give instructions to the actors, and insults other theater-goers on the lower tier in the worst way possible. Repeating the same insults over and over again, Lincoln conveys the impression of being mentally retarded ("now you fucked up" alone is repeated at least nine times, "what" seven times). In my view, it is hardly possible to come across more unsympathetically. This leads me to think that one possible function of this very negative depiction could be, in a transferred sense, blaming Lincoln himself for his death as he provoked a whole part of his nation and made them so angry that they were willing to go into war to fight for their basis of existence, i.e., extremely low labor costs through slavery. On a more apparent level, the sketch creates its humor by inverting attributes that the viewers might originally associate with Lincoln, i.e., good behavior, eloquence, or reluctance. Thus, I consider the sketch an at least thought-provoking piece of comedy that might serve as an impulse to reconsider if the actions of the sixteenth president of the United States were all noble and might give reasons for the South's secession.

Abraham Lincoln reappears in episode five in another sketch of season one that approaches the subject of his assassination. Whereas its title "John Wilkes Booth" reveals that the assassinator is the protagonist, the skit nevertheless gives enough substance to make inferences about Lincoln. This time, the President is not portrayed as negatively as four episodes before, but he is still being made fun of as a part of a slapstick comedy. In contrast to the preceding sketch, where Lincoln's balcony was mainly pictured from below, the viewer is now at the level of the balcony and witnesses Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd watching a play, only to be regularly disturbed by clumsy assassinator Booth whose many attempts to hurt/kill the President desperately fail. The responsible security guard is likewise portrayed incompetent and dilettante as he is not able to prevent Booth from sneaking in again and again.

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<sup>180</sup> Several interviews on the channel's official homepage IFC.com.

President Lincoln is shown typically dressed—wearing a beard, stovepipe hat, and a black suite. However, his hat is not properly upright in a vertical position but at an angle. In my opinion, this immediately gives the impression of a not too serious representation. When asked what he wants to drink, he orders a Diet Coke for himself and overrules his rather chubby wife and requests a diet drink for her as well, which leads me to the conclusion that the President might be wearing the pants in their marriage. While Mr. and Mrs. President are making small talk that switches between insignificant evening plans and actual crucial indications about a British invasion, John Wilkes Booth fails miserably at assassinating the President several times. Booth's attempts include slapping the President with a phone book, throwing an orange at him, and hitting him with a shoe. Each time Lincoln calls for his security guard who eventually sends off Booth. One time, Booth does not even try to harm Lincoln physically, but takes his hat and throws it from the balcony. This scene seems to me to have a special position and bears the greatest potential for making inferences about Lincoln's representation:

Mary Todd: "That man is a troublemaker." [Referring to the attacker]

Lincoln: "He threw my hat away!"

Mary Todd: "Forget about it, Abe."

Lincoln: "But I always wanna wear that hat now."

Mary Todd: "Forget about that hat, Abraham!"

Lincoln: "But I want that to be my thing, I told you."

Mary Todd: "You still have the beard, that is good enough. Just be quiet, relax, and let's watch the rest of the play, OK?"

Lincoln: "Now that guy is wearing my head!"

Mary Todd: "Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

[Lincoln turns around in angst]

Mary Todd: "What are you doing? You act like a crazy person!"



The sixteenth President of the United States is portrayed acting like a young child whose toy was taken away. Whining, crestfallen and defiantly complaining like a schoolboy, his role and relationship to his wife comes across rather like one of a child to its mother and clearly reverses my initial thought on his being the man in charge. His wife loses patience with him, changes her form of address towards her husband from Abe to Abraham. However, another interesting depiction is that he arguably aimed at establishing his hat, in combination with his beard, as a trademark sign (“But I want that to be my thing, I told you”) and this assumption reflects a potential cleverness on his side. The play finishes with another attack by Booth, this time armed with a shoe, leading to a discussion between the security guard and the presumed assassin in which the former accuses the latter of not having “the balls” to bring a gun and shoot the president. The sketch fades out and from this point on, it is up to the audience to draw the conclusion about the “real” reason behind Lincoln’s death.

The mixture of arguably correct historical references (Booth shouting “sic temper tyrannis”) and modern day signs of the times (security guards everywhere, trivial babble), combined with the inexpressibly incapable actions of both the security guard and John Wilkes Booth make up a good basis for a hilarious sketch. Focusing on Lincoln, however, his role hovers between a positive depiction (e.g., he is congratulated on winning war, worries about strategy, etc.) and taking on an inferior position (wife takes over control, he wants his hat back, whines when being hit with various objects). My impression is that Lincoln seems a bit lost and torn between his security that does not help and a wife that does not seem to care at all, seeking for help and attention without being heard at all. Though the sketch is more on making a fool of Booth and his incompetence, I claim that this skit, in terms of Lincoln, also serves to highlight the bad influences surrounding Lincoln at the different levels presented.

#### Mocking on Lincoln’s Character: Arrogance

Animated Series, *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*

Aqua Teen’s Lincoln appears right in the first act, even before the opening theme is heard. This over-the-top surreal scene serves as an explanation of where the ATHF originally comes from. Frylock gets severely injured while fighting a giant poodle in the desert of ancient Egypt. The trio then meets Abe Lincoln who is introduced as a witch doctor. Lincoln offers his help

in form of a shelter (a log cabin), food, and “some kick ass video games”. The game turns out to be an 8-bit version of a Civil War arcade in which Shake is able to defeat the Northern States and ensures slavery for the Southern farmers with the words “the South rises again”, only to realize that his opponent, Frylock, performed so poorly because he was dead. Lincoln then claims that he could bring the living pack of French fries back to life. As Master Shake does not believe Lincoln, a bet between the two is made. But before the dairy product is fully resurrected, CIA agents show up and the President assists the gang in fleeing in a VW beetle convertible. The unreal plot continues as Lincoln gives the trio access to his rocket “Abe Force One”, which is supposed to shoot the fast food items into space. Before leaving earth, Lincoln says that Frylock will wake up at any moment but in a “extraordinarily dumb” state as an undesirable side-effect. After the launch of the rocket, Lincoln holds the line and is shortly after encircled by the agents. Fully charged with self-confidence, the president refers to himself as “Time Lincoln” and announces that no one will ever catch him, pushing down the top of his stovepipe hat in order to beam away. But right before he totally vanishes, a bullet hits his head and he drops dead. The scene ends with the agents, as consequence of shooting Lincoln and altering the timeline, being hitched up in front of a cart with a black master cracking a whip on them. I argue that President Lincoln’s depiction fits to the overall characteristic of the movie as he is illustrated in a pointed and overstate way. This applies to both his visual appearance and assigned behavior and traits.

In terms of his outer looks, “Time Lincoln” is drawn with rather sharp lines and edges (see appendix, fig. 12). To my view, this makes him look rather aggressive and cruel. Although he wears his typical hat, beard, and suit, it is his red bow-tie that stands out and underlines his belligerent look. Additionally, his teeth appear big and strong. Speaking of his traits, I assign several examples to his angst-inducing presence, be it mimic, gesture, or behavior. First of all, Lincoln seems to like showing his teeth, grinning broadly several times. Moreover, he gibingly laughs at the agents, stretching his breast with a lot of self-confidence. Also, his car radio is preset to rock music, which potentially strengthens my assumption of a frightening character. However, I cannot neglect probable signs of integrity and empathy as other instances counteract his aforementioned general depiction. Lincoln drives a VW Beetle, a car that I would describe as mixture of square and hipster. Falling into the same category is the President’s supply of video games. Also, Lincoln is shown as helpful and scarifying as he

gives his life for the trio. Moreover, his soft voice and modern slang language (“waddup”, “how much you wanna bet, bro?”) does not seem to fit in at all.

On a more general note, Time Lincoln is obviously equipped with super powers; he is shown beaming from one spot to another and is most likely responsible for resurrecting Frylock. Whereas I was not able to completely pin down Lincoln’s character into one single category, I see him not depicted as a strict idealist who fights on the side of the state (he fights CIA agents), but rather as an arrogant character that does not cooperate with intelligence service of the U.S. government and stands above all. The ending makes an allusion to “what if” Lincoln was not shot. In the comic universe, his death leads to the black community turning the tables and exploiting the white people. This might serve as a stimulus to let viewers think of how influential the sixteenth president was and that the world might have been a better one if he had stayed alive a little longer—including a more peaceful communal life of blacks and whites and North and South in his aftermath. However, as it was Lincoln who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, one could also argue that he is to blame for the behavior of the black community.

#### Mocking on Lincoln’s Character: Sexual Activeness

##### TV Show, *Dharma & Greg*, “Dutch Treat”

Abraham Lincoln gets a mention at two different times in the episode. The first reference is made orally by Greg when he takes Lincoln as an example for being a noble lawyer and, secondly, Lincoln appears towards the very end in one of the character’s dreams. Although his depiction starts in a positive light, it turns out to become a stultification of his sexual activeness. When Greg tries to convince his colleagues to provide intern Donald with more relevant tasks and stop using him as their personal gofer, he makes use of Abraham Lincoln in his appeal to his workmates:

Donald is not here to run your errands. . . Come on people. The young man wants to become a lawyer. He wants to follow in the footsteps of Abraham Lincoln and Clarence Darrow. He wants to overcome injustice, to protect the downtrodden. Now let’s give him a chance to experience the nobility of the law.

In terms of Lincoln, the president's origin as a (self-made) lawyer is highlighted and taken as a role model of the "nobility of the law". According to Greg, Lincoln—along with Darrow—seems to personify the fight "to overcome injustice" and to protect the oppressed. Vice versa, this "noble" profession and attitude colors on Lincoln and his representation in this scene.

The second scene in which Abraham Lincoln comes into play has him appear physically (see appendix, fig. 33). Even though the Wikipedia summary refers to the president's cameo as important to the plot<sup>181</sup>, I rather see it as a cutaway gag to offer a nice ending of the episode. Nevertheless, it follows a comic function and is therefore beneficial to my thesis. In the very last scene, Abraham Lincoln enters the office rooms and a conversation between him and the leading characters takes place:

Lincoln: "Excuse me, is Peter Cabanaw in? I have a very important legal question only he can answer."

Greg [to Dharma]: "OK, it's a dream."

Dharma: "I am sorry Mr. President, but he's gonna be gone for a couple of hours."

Lincoln: "Ohh... Shoot!"

Dharma: "Do you want to come out to lunch with us?"

Lincoln: "Oh no thank you, I have a hat full of waffles." [Handing a waffle to Dharma]

Dharma [tasting waffle]: "Mmm, waffley"

Lincoln: "I've got syrup in my pants!"

[Everyone bursting out laughing, probably breaking the script].

In my view, the president's appearance has the potential of working on two levels here. First, it plays to the comedy effect—by letting Lincoln take waffles out of his famous hat and express his disappointment about having missed Peter with an ambiguous "shoot!"—and lets Greg and the audience realize that they are experiencing a dream. The latter point is also reinforced by Lincoln asking for Peter in order to get an answer to a legal issue. As pointed

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<sup>181</sup> "When things finally get really tense, only an obscure dream and a visit from Abraham Lincoln can close the divide." ("Dharma")

out before, Lincoln has been portrayed as the ultimate lawyer so there should not be any need for him to seek assistance. Also, his allusion to waffles could lead the audience to think of waffles as “empty or pretentious words”, as the Merian Webster Dictionary describes it, thereby ambiguously alluding to Lincoln’s rhetorical skills. On a different level, Lincoln in particular is being stultified to a certain extent. His notion of having syrup in his pants is arguably not statesmen-like and could possibly be a sexual innuendo and allude to his sexual activeness.

### Mocking on Lincoln’s Character: Mental Disease

#### Animated Series, *Futurama*, “Lincolnbot”

Besides the previously mentioned “Robot Lincoln”, “Head in Jar”, and “Evil Lincoln”, the role of “Abraham Lincolnbot”/“Linctron”<sup>182</sup> completes the quartet of Lincoln illustrations within the *Futurama* universe. “Linctron” is a robot version diagnosed with multiple personality disorder, inhabiting 200 personalities—all of them Lincoln. It appears in the episode “Insane in the Mainframe”. The story is about Bender and Fry being sent to the HAL institute for mentally insane robots after involuntarily becoming part of a bank robbery. Both meet “Linctron” when they are shown around the restroom of the asylum. It is modelled on the audio-animatronic version of “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” at Disneyland, California, and after getting up from his seat it utters: “I was born in 200 log cabins” (see appendix, fig. 34). Both mimic and jerky gestures suggest that “Linctron” is an allusion to Disneyland’s homage<sup>183</sup> to the sixteenth president. On the one hand, his short quote serves as a proof for him having multiple personalities as he was born in two hundred different places. Since all of those places are supposed to be log cabins—and the real Abraham Lincoln was born in an example of this modest, wooden housing (Nagler 21)—it can be explained why all of his personalities are thought to be Lincoln-esque. Approaching the potential functions of this particular depiction leads me to a dual suggestion. In the first place, his famous decent outer appearance—wearing a bow-tie, tail coat, and his typical hat—in connection with the

<sup>182</sup> *Futurama Wikia* ([futurama.wikia.com/wiki/Abraham\\_Lincolnbot](http://futurama.wikia.com/wiki/Abraham_Lincolnbot)) and *The Infosphere*

([theinfosphere.org/Lincolnbot](http://theinfosphere.org/Lincolnbot)) refer to the same character with two different names. There seems no official term. In terms of simplification, I will refer to it as “Linctron”.

<sup>183</sup> I refer to it as homage since the official homepage refers to it as “the Great Emancipator returns to tell the tale of generations past and share his inspiring—and still very relevant—vision of the future” (“Disneyland”).

linking to Disneyland's venerating show is likely to cause positive feelings among the audience<sup>184</sup>. In the second place, however, looking at the inner "Linctron" suggest that there seems more behind the scenes. A lunatic robot Lincoln potentially symbolizes a burned out president. This could refer to both the historical figure Lincoln being made use of for so many different purposes and the particular addressed figure in Disneyland which burns out after giving the same speech over and over again. This may be considered a critique on the allegedly worn-out feature in the Disney theme park. If referring to the historical figure, one could argue that it might impute certain character traits to the president—in this case, debatably, having to cope with a split personality in real life or, at least, being close to craziness. Another possible argumentation could be that the authors tried to transfer speculations about Mary Todd Lincoln's suspected mental illness (Emerson, Neely and McMurtry) to Abraham Lincoln himself, be it because her disease rubs off on her husband or because it was not the wife who was insane but the president himself. Whereas the last assumption may seem a bit farfetched, I claim that this controversy at least rounds out Lincoln's overall portrayal in the cosmos of *Futurama*: multifaceted, not too easy to read, and occupying both positively connoted sides, e.g., Robot Lincoln's role as the Emancipator of all robots, as well as negatively signified ones, as the role of "Evil Lincoln" demonstrates.

#### Mocking on Lincoln's Character: Alcoholic

##### Animated Series, *Hard Drinkin' Lincoln*

Each chapter of the web-series follows a common structure and depicts Lincoln in a grotesque and exaggerated manner, "rewriting the history of the 16th U. S. President, a-swirling in suds and time warps" (Durrett). It starts with the theme song of the show, followed by some heavy insults and unacceptable behavior by the president in various context, being "so obnoxious that the audience applauds when John Wilkes Booth shoots him" (Schwartz 2008, 163) at the end of most shows.

The theme song (see appendix, fig. 13) and its lyrics prepare the viewer for an upcoming absurd show and set the tone for the forthcoming two minutes:

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<sup>184</sup> This assumption is backed up by another example in popular culture. In the episode "Disneyland" of the TV-series *Modern Family* (Season 3, Episode 22) Jay Pritchett reminisces that attending the Lincoln show together with his children made him stay with his wife for the sake of his kids back when they were young.

Abraham Lincoln is deserving of glory but when he starts drinking it's a whole different story. The Great Emancipator becomes an irritator. He's a rabbit Irish hater and a public masturbator. Abraham Lincoln. Hard Drinking Lincoln. Stinking drunk Lincoln—That's me.

To some extent, the first sentence could serve as an explanation of the creator's motive for creating humor out of Lincoln's "innocence" as he is quoted "that it's a totally undeserved attack. The comedy comes from the fact that this man [Lincoln] did nothing to deserve this" (Anthony 2). Even though some scholars claim that referring to Lincoln as a teetotaler is wrong, I have only found descriptions of moderate/light drinking by Lincoln at the most (Bigham 73). Also, I have found no proof of Lincoln being a hater of the Irish (Kenny, D. Gleeson). Hence, taking the opposite of the general perceptions of the sixteenth President—a motive that is not only typical of the theme but also reoccurs throughout the different episodes—supports the show's attempt at becoming funny by deconstructing the president. However, since the deconstruction is so widely exaggerated, it has, in my view, no such effect of demystifying Abraham Lincoln and opens room for different views and interpretations of the episodes, since it is not only the author alone but also the audience who are part in the reciprocity around a popular artifact.

The various plots, if one can speak of a plot for a two-minute cartoon at all, take Lincoln into a widely varied abundance of contexts. For example, he meets Muhanda Gandhi, who had not even been born yet in 1865, in India and has both of them paint the town red. Another time, Hard Drinkin Lincoln serves as Booth's lifeline on "Who Wants to a \$5 Gold Piece", an obvious parody of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire", and giving the wrong answer, which results in Booth's thoughts of revenge. Other examples are Lincoln disturbing various performances—a movie<sup>185</sup>, a theater play (*Othello*), or even his own show "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln"—all of them taking place in a theater patterned on the infamous Ford's Theater. In all episodes, Lincoln's misbehavior makes people around him so furious that they show open bloodlust towards the president. In all but one episode, this results in Lincoln being shot with no one really regretting it. Another recurring motive is the president's brisk and harsh manners toward his wife Mary Todd and other female characters. "A nattering

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<sup>185</sup> In episode 5, "The Rocky Hitler Picture Show", Hard Drinkin' Lincoln attends "Schindler's List" because "Rocky Horror" is not shown.

scoop of lard”, “Can I put my log in your cabin?”<sup>186</sup>, and “Hey baby, can I split your rails”<sup>187</sup> are only a few examples of offenses that clearly show forms of even sexual harassment.

Showing Lincoln in such an extreme manner, in my opinion, can not only be explained by following the creators argument that “Lincoln [has] so many things you can make a joke about . . . his height, his beard, his wart, he split rails, all of it.” (Anthony). The play with opposites<sup>188</sup> might serve several different functions. I tend to support Busack’s assertion that the creator might have also wanted to give utterance to his fellow citizens’ “resentment of any American, even one as saintly as Old Abe, being presented as a paragon” (Busack). It follows from that assumption that “Hard Drinkin Lincoln” possibly serves as an antipode to all the worshipping of “the Great Emancipator”. Furthermore, this time I take a step back from my previous statement of Reiss’ use of opposites as there is some truth in the storyline. Abraham Lincoln indeed failed and deceived people, which eventually led to his assassination<sup>189</sup>. All in all, I come to the conclusion that it was the obvious intention of the author to use one of the most famous persons in the history of the US to easily generate jokes, pointing to Jim Getty’s statement that Lincoln himself might “be the first one to say, ‘Relax and enjoy’” (Anthony 3)<sup>190</sup> with regard to the show. But at the same time, the interpretation of the series allows the audience to infer that by the creator’s use of the described heavy opposites an indirect criticism about the worshipping and praising character of most Lincoln references might be taking place.

### Mocking Physical Appearance: Mole

Animated Series, *Futurama*, “All the President’s Heads”

Besides the already discussed appearance as “Head in Jar” that I categorized as a reinvention of Lincoln as criticizer of the modern advertising industry, his (chronological) first “head only” presence mainly makes fun of the president’s looks.

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<sup>186</sup> Episode 4 “Randy Gandhi, Part II-- Oh Calcutta”

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Lincoln is shown as pure evil and scum, as an alcoholic vs. his believed life as a teetotaler, as a man who teases the South and spoils the South’s surrender in contrast to his call for showing no malice towards none.

<sup>189</sup> Just to name the financial breakdown of the Southern economy after winning the Civil War and abolishing slavery as the most striking example.

<sup>190</sup> Getty is a Lincoln impersonator and was quoted



In the episode “All the Presidents’ Heads”, Lincoln’s head is not part of the main plotline—which takes place in the “Hall of Presidents”, where most of the heads of former US presidents have been preserved—but appears earlier as a sort of establishing warm-up, independent pre-scene. There, the minder of the hall takes care of bearded president’s head because his facial hair is polluted with algae. In order to remedy this infestation, the guard puts a fish in the jar to have it attack the contamination. But to the contrary, the fish does not clean the beard but attack Lincoln’s “trademark mole” on his right cheek. I claim that this pre-scene serves at least two different functions. First, it gives Lincoln a special role and insinuates in a comic style that Abraham Lincoln is worshipped and taken good care of in the *Futurama* universe. Second, it draws attention to the spot that decorates the president’s face and that has been subject of both popular and scientific discussion. For instance, some investigations try to draw inferences from the mole to Lincoln’s overall state of health (Sotos xv, Munger). Other (hobby) scholars occupy themselves with finding out on which site of his face the original mole was located (Holzer 2004, 96). Hence, I argue that *Futurama* might aim at ridiculing the importance of the small mole in particular or on the general widespread objects of studies in relationship to the sixteenth president. I back this assumption by pointing out Lincoln’s helpless situation in the jar on the one hand, comparing it to Lincoln not being able to defend himself against the “stripping” of his legacy by the huge amount of investigations on every conceivable topic. On the other hand, Lincoln’s jar is only labelled “Abe Lincoln”, which makes the whole scene, to my view, appear even more mocking and teasing—underlining its ridiculous character.

#### Mocking Physical Appearance: Unsexiness

##### TV Advertisement, *Mattel Inc.*, “Apples to Apples”

The ad by Mattel Inc. was not only shown on TV nationwide but was also posted on the official Facebook page of “Apples to Apples” (“Is it”) and YouTube (Apples to Apples). Since the board game is advertised with the slogan about “crazy combinations”, I infer that in this case the craziest combination has won and, thus, the fun is drawn from opposites and contrasts. On this understanding, I infer that Lincoln is supposed to be anything but sexy and, thus, fun is made of his lanky appearance. However, I admit that the play with opposites might indirectly associate him with positive attributes such as “honesty”, as this is explicitly

stated on the “Apples to Apples” Facebook page. Other possible connotations might be Lincoln as a “winner” on the one hand, and might be as a man of ideas (Guelzo 2009) and his multifacetedness on the other—as the method of the game implies having “thing cards”, e.g. “Abraham Lincoln”, with a huge potential of being associated with different “descriptions” to allow for the best possible entertainment. Nevertheless, since only the advertisement is object of this study, I share the opinion that showing Lincoln in “nothing but booty shorts and a top hat, gyrating to weird techno music” is disrespectful and derogative (“Abe”).

### Making Lincoln a Villain

#### Animated Series, *Futurama*, “Evil Lincoln”

The third form of appearance, “Evil Lincoln”, is a product of a malfunctioning holo-shed on spaceship Nimbus in episode “Kif Gets Knocked Up a Notch”. Along with some of the greatest villains of mankind—Attila the Hun, Jack the Ripper, and Professor Moriarty—Lincoln becomes real and escapes the holodeck, causing mayhem aboard. The evil incarnation wears the typical hat, beard, mole, and carries an axe, with which he smashes several flowerpots while screaming “Real holographic simulated Evil Lincoln is back!” (see appendix, fig. 35). In the fight between the crew and the villains the hull of the ship is damaged and the scoundrels are sucked through decompression into outer space. Unexplainably, “Evil Lincoln” reappears with a short cameo some minutes later into the episode, but is never to be seen again later on.

The episode is one of the many samples in which the world of *Futurama* makes references to the Star Trek franchise (“Star Trek”). This seems plausible, since both series are science-fiction and might share a common fanbase. First, there are many direct allusions to “Star Trek: The Original Series” to be found. For instance, Doctor Maccoy has a cameo as a doctor and the original, typical sounds, such as the beaming one, are used. Second, the overall storyline is inspired by various episodes of different Star Trek series. For example, Moriarty has come to live through a malfunctioning holodeck in the “Star Trek: The Next Generation” episodes “Elementary, Dear Data” and “Ship in a Bottle”. Also, the idea of introducing Lincoln is not new to Star Trek fans as there was a cross-reference to the “Star Trek: The Original Series” episode “The Savage Curtain” in which Lincoln joins the crew of the

enterprise to fight the greatest human villains and finds a heroic death. Adopting Lincoln against the background of his original appearance in the *Star Trek* universe seems to be a clever move in terms of attracting new viewers to the series and increasing popularity. This time, the sixteenth president is shown as an evil character, being part of “History’s Greatest Villains”. As Moriarty explains, this group’s goal is to cause “murder and mayhem” as their “standard procedure”. Lincoln’s role in the group is, to my mind, a leading one since he enables them to flee the holoshed and is also shown laughing in an extremely evil way. An inversion of the normal perception of Lincoln takes place and this turnaround mocks both *Star Trek* and Lincoln at the same time, which leads us to potential functions of Lincoln’s appearance. As already mentioned, the use of giving the bearded president a role in a science-fiction series might have been done to provide a boost in popularity and even gain new supporters. However, since the president’s role has always been depicted as honorable in the adventures of the Enterprise (see chapter 3), the heavy contrast in his depiction in this *Futurama* episode might also occur in order to question his heroic appearances in his *Star Trek* of the 1960’s and 1990’s. This thought gets support from the other different appearances of the Lincoln character mentioned—with the exception of Lincolnbot which does not even get a visual role—from which none is solely of a praising function. The fact that “Evil Lincoln” seems to have returned on the ship after being lost in space, taking part in a conversation out of nowhere<sup>191</sup> as a sort of lean-in role, could be best described as comedy effect. Even though it might be plausible to argue that Lincoln’s reappearance shall symbolize that the historical figure Abraham Lincoln lives forever and recurs in all kinds of situations and forms in contemporary being, it could also be explained as another malfunction of the holo-shed. Either way, having Lincoln take over an evil role and, thus, parodying his native character of his previous *Star Trek* appearance, is the most striking feature of this episode. Added to the already mentioned aspects, Evil Lincoln represents mayhem and chaos and this arguably serves the function of conveying the authors’ interpretation of the presidential (partly) character. Potentially, the creation of this particular vicious variety of Abraham Lincoln functions as a reminder about what the Civil War caused, involved, and entailed—be it the innumerable casualties, the increased hatred between North and South, and economic loss for the defeated Confederacy.

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<sup>191</sup> Fry: “Dude hold up! Remember when Zapp blew a hole in the ship?” Evil Lincoln: “Indeed.”

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study set out to explore representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular media memory in the twenty-first century. Within this framework, popular media were defined as wide-ranging, relevant, and closely connected to everyday life. By linking the past with the present, the various Lincoln depictions assist in forming and constructing images and, thus, shaping collective memories. This finds expression in different potential functions and attributes the figure of Abraham Lincoln various purposes.

The analyses of 48 visual media depictions have shown a colorful and topical former president with still-present cultural relevancy. His recent appearances in films, TV shows, animated series, advertisements, music videos, Internet memes, and comics cover a broad range of nuances that I arranged in three main categories. With slightly more than half of all representations (25.5), the majority of texts re-invents the sixteenth president and puts him into current contexts, thirteen depictions aim mainly at demystifying Lincoln, and 9.5 examples have the main purpose of eulogizing the former head of state. Within those three classifications, his depictions are just as manifold.

The various examples of a re-invented Lincoln become apparent in different main motives: Lincoln as a reference (once), a counselor (twice), a moral authority (three instances), a supporter of specific causes (three times), a representative of a subculture (once) and the “normal guy” (four examples), a fighter against new menaces (two and a half), and critique against (nine times) topical issues. I grant that this fragmentation is based on my assessment and single representations might have been allocated to a different sub-category (as sometimes the difference between a moral authority and a spokesperson is rather narrow), but I claim that the diversity of roles that I have tried to convey proceeds and becomes more distinct when looking closely at the subcategories. The Illinois-rooted statesman is used to serve as a representative for both today’s subculture of “hipsters” (*memes*) and also the everyman (*Drunk History*, *South Park*, *Venture Bros.*) including counseling function to calmly appeal to the viewers of the movie *Night at the Museum* and children and teenagers facing inner struggles (*Adventure Time*, *Clone High*). Twice Lincoln finds a use in taking a stand against bullying (*Drunk History* and *South Park*), his figure is used twice to call for gay rights (*American Dad!*, *Electric Six*) and once to support the legalization of soft drugs (*Whitest Kids U Know*). In Jay Leno’s *Tonight Show*, a Lincoln personification acts as a

reference person and shines on Barack Obama, thus, taking influence on current political debates. Furthermore, I have outlined that the depiction of Lincoln fighting new enemies, as in *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*, *Venture Bros.*, and *Time Lincoln*, potentially serves as a wish for strong leadership in times of current fears, such as terrorism or impacts of the banking crisis. However, the most prominent manifestation of the re-invented Lincoln is that of a critic, bringing all his potential influence to bear on specific needs—sometimes tackling such big topics as defending constitutional rights as a moral authority (*The Conspirator*), sometimes addressing smaller issues such the uncritical and wrong quoting of historical figures (*Internet Memes*). His representations criticize today's politicians in general (*Epic Rap Battles*) and George W. Bush in particular (*Robot Chicken*), or ongoing media hypes (*Epic Rap Battles* about Chuck Norris) and society's need to see heroes failing (*Ultimate Showdown of Ultimate Destiny*). Furthermore, the figure Lincoln is used to negatively comment on its own representations as his depictions rebuke the boring outcome of the movie *Lincoln* (*MAD*) and his exploitation by the advertising industry (*Futurama*, *Family Guy*).

The diversity of topics embraced by different Lincoln representations becomes likewise evident within the category of “the Eulogized Lincoln”, as worshipping depictions are by no means limited to a sole emancipator image, as Schwartz stated in 2008. Even though this type of portrait occurs twice (Lincoln, *Futurama*), many other forms are noticeable. His depiction as “Son of Mars” in *Adventure Time* glorifies him as a god-like martyr that sacrifices his life, the portrayal in *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* mainly highlights his merits in saving the union. His accentuation as statesman in the discussed advertisement of the Lincoln Motor Company completes the picture of honoring the political Lincoln. Furthermore, his character as “Honest Abe” is foregrounded on two occasions (Rozerem, Geico), his closeness to his people is emphasized in Mountain Dew's commercial, and the illustrated relationship to black abolitionist Frederick Douglass in *Drunk History* highlights Lincoln's open mind regardless of race.

In contrast to the above-mentioned 9.5 examples of popular texts paying absolute tribute to the sixteenth president of the United States of America, this study has also revealed thirteen depictions that, to my understanding, damage Lincoln's reputation and point at negative features of his life. Just as glorifying depictions addressed both Lincoln's political and private

life, the demystifying parts also mentioned those two sides. In terms of political hostility, a Southern view on the outcome of the Civil War is offered on different occasions. The former commander-in-chief's warfare is criticized twice (*The Simpsons*, *Robot Chicken*), as are the consequences for the defeated Confederate States (*Louis C.K.*, *Family Guy*). With three instances, the most prominent token is the highlighting of Lincoln's general bad character—*Aqua Teen Hunger Force* depicts him in an extremely arrogant way, *Whitest Kids U Know* even goes one step further and blames his nerve-wracking behavior and incompetency respectively for his assassination twice. Moreover, mental problems (*Futurama*), alcoholism (*Hard Drinkin' Lincoln*), and an inappropriate sexual activeness (*Dharma & Greg*) are broached.

The movie *Lincoln* takes up a special position within the category of the eulogized president. Although put under the heading of its main motif as an ode to emancipating the slaves, this single categorization hardly does justice to the comprehensive approach of glorification. This study has revealed a complex offer of positive attributes, such as saving the union after all, offering guidance in difficult times, exemplary leadership skills including timing, rhetoric, and cabinet management. Moreover his character displayed was plagued by fears about his family and protégé qua office, the American people, and even towards the defeated South, as the mentioned quote “with malice towards none” proves.

My claim of a colorful Lincoln that is suited und reshaped for such a great variety of topics becomes particularly evident within two of the most prominent animated series, *Futurama* and *the Simpsons*. As my study has shown, even within one single show, Lincoln is used for very different, sometimes even opposing purposes. *Futurama* does admittedly not fail to mention Abraham Lincoln's achievement of emancipation, but it also makes various other, arguably minor, topics main subjects of their storylines. Amongst them are the issues of illness and insanity, brutality and murder, as well as stages of social criticism having let Lincoln wither to a laughing stock of the advertising industry and a (maybe long forgotten) pitiful character of a theme park. In the *Simpsons'* cosmos, as I have argued, Lincoln's historical status and position is potentially used from a morally judging perspective to criticize various aspects of life, for example, the steroid-contaminated baseball league, the unscrupulous advertising industry, as well as society as a whole for its desire to see heroes fall. Furthermore, a yellow Lincoln figure is introduced to speak up for the gay rights movement. However, his character

is also used to draw attention to the critically assessed recruiting measures of the U.S. army, with him being a forerunner in times of the Civil War.

The motto of “diversity” also manifests itself when looking at potential target audiences of the different texts: from family blockbuster movies such as *Night at the Museum* to adult late night comedy formats like the one by Louis C.K., from children animation such as *Adventure Time* to adult cartoons like *MAD!*. Furthermore, the distribution channels vary as well, Lincoln depictions can be found in free-to-air TV channels such as *ABC* as well as on cable network channels such as *Adult Swim*. This shows that the sixteenth president is likely to become part of popular media memories within the entire nation, from young to old, from poor to rich, from north to south.

Another noteworthy finding is that no *movie* displayed him in a predominantly negative way, none of them aimed at demystifying Lincoln. However, it came as no real surprise that most commercials approached the ex-president’s positive side. A more exciting discovery is the already mentioned trend that the more independent a text seems in its distribution; the more relentless the dealing with Abraham Lincoln appears. When taking the most extreme depictions into consideration—on the one side the movies *Lincoln* and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* as arguably most eulogizing examples, on the other side both performances by *Whitest Kids U Know* as probably most demystifying instances—it is observable that the most positive depictions are blockbuster movies with high budgets and the most negative ones occurring on the small TV station IFC, which stands for Independent Film Channel. However, this is just an assumption that would need further investigation and could not be accomplished within this thesis.

The Internet is probably the medium that enables the largest amount of people to react on social events in a minimum of time. As demonstrated, creating memes is one way of interacting and all three presented categories of Lincoln memes compliment the former president by either making him a representative of the hipster subculture, a warning figure against the gullible and uncritical attribution of citations and his legacy, or a role model for present leaders by equipping him with uber-presidential features.

Also, sometimes famous actors slipped into the role of the sixteenth president, e.g., Daniel Day-Lewis or Will Ferrell, some other times hitherto rather unknown actors took over this

role, for instance in the *Whitest Kids U Know* or *Epic Rap Battles of History*. In addition, his high recognition factor makes Lincoln so approachable. In some cases, actors did not even have to dress up to become associated with Lincoln: a stovepipe hat and/or a beard, as fake as it might be, seem enough, which demonstrates the Illinois-rooted president's high recognition value and anchoring in the minds of the people.

The fact that the Lincoln of popular media memory frequently appears in comedy segments and/or animated series happens very probably not due to his attributed humorous character only. As stated, I rather assume that an exaggerated depiction is especially enabled by the means of humor, irony, and sarcasm on the one side and/or animated depictions on the other. However, this does not change the core of the to be transmitted (and previously demonstrated) messages. What started in the 1980s with light humor, has by now reached a level of occasional disrespect. It will be interesting to see if demystifying depictions will take a bigger share in future. For now, those are clearly counterbalanced by an adequate amount of glorifying depictions that guarantee a multifaceted image of president number sixteen and an (almost) equal ratio between consent and dissent.

The assumption of an existing colorful Abraham Lincoln in popular media memory has been proven and the study has shown that there is a Lincoln for (almost) everyone available. The Kentucky-born statesman is still a dignified and relevant person that embodies a richness of ideals and opinions to address current topics and holding up a mirror to the people. However, the amount of examples mentioned denouncing the former president brings out that his historical role is under dispute and discussion and not taken for granted. As previously mentioned, after the special year of 2009, the number of glorifying depictions increased: Albeit surprising in terms of clarity (8 out of 9.5 examples after 2008), yet reasoned by the indicated circumstances of Lincoln's Bicentennial birthday and Barack Obama's Inauguration. Now it will be worth observing if this trend is going to continue or start to decline with increasing temporal distance to 2009.

Although I expected that some types of depictions of the twentieth century would become completely lost and forgotten, this did not hold as only one image type, the one of "the folk Lincoln", does not re-emerge in the new millennium. However, since the existing image of "the man of the people" comes very close and is still vivid, this argument is even weakened. All other topics of the twentieth century re-occurred within the last fourteen years, if only in



modified and updated form. This finding confirms my estimation of a still multifarious Lincoln that is present within so many kinds of social groups and that is not diminishing or even restricted to small communities.

I have thoroughly observed the various addressed media; painstakingly searched Internet message boards, scientific papers, and books; and also asked friends and colleagues from all over the globe to watch for Lincoln representations in popular media. However, it is very likely that I have missed or overseen objects that would have fit into this study. If so, I certainly recommend their subsequent inclusion or making them part of other prospective studies. Furthermore, I am aware that I was only able to offer potential explanations that I attempted to reason as profound as possible, but my analyses remain subjective, interpretative approaches that should also function as appetizers for pluralistic views and an open discussion. Moreover, as this study has at no time laid claim to being all-embracing, I would appreciate and call for further scholarship in this field and related topics to fill in gaps. Since I focused on visual objects in popular media and it has been stated that this list is likely to be incomplete, further emphases could be placed on different kinds of texts of popular media, e.g., printed sources or radio contributions. Certainly, a focus on depictions on the Internet alone would provide enough material for profound research as well as I have mainly focused on memes only. In my opinion, it would also be worthwhile following the development of Lincoln's place in popular media memory in the future: Is Schwartz's assumption of a fading need for heroes entering this field, too? Will Lincoln's relevancy diminish as other icons pop up and replace him, especially with regard to the digital era? Will forgotten functions be recalled (Funktionen- vs. Speichergedächtnis)? Additionally, it seems to suggest itself that the framework of popular media memory can be applied to other former presidents, celebrities, or other former persons of public interests that are even after their demise part of the media world and observable in popular media of the twenty-first century.

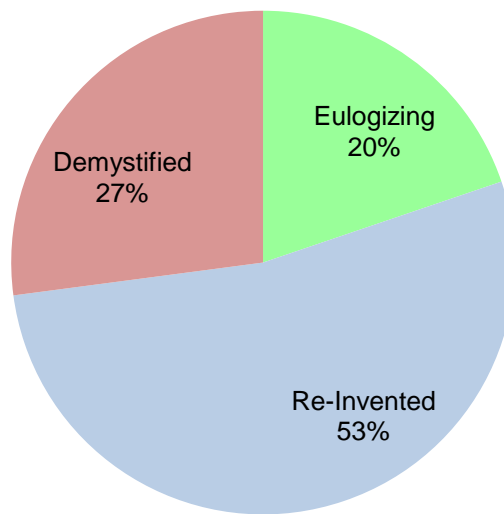
*Recent representations of Abraham Lincoln in popular visual media show a very colorful ex-president and maintain the complex picture that had been growing over the course of time since before the turn of the century. Most depictions use Lincoln by reinventing and (re)shaping him in order to answer or comment on present issues. Even though the demonstrated trend of turning Lincoln into a figure of fun has been continuing, the amounts of examples depicting him in an iconic limelight counter these findings.*

## APPENDICES

## Overview of Analytical Findings

Object	Detail	Medium	Genre	Year	Category	Detail
Apples to Apples		TV	Advertisement	2012	Deny stifying	Mocking Physical Appearance: Unsexiness
Aqua Teen Hunger Force		TV	Animated Series	2007	Deny stifying	Mocking on Lincoln's Character: Arrogance
Dharma & Greg		TV	Comedy	2001	Deny stifying	Mocking on Lincoln's Character: Sexual Activeness
Family Guy	The Man With Two Brn	TV	Animated Series	2008	Deny stifying	Criticizing Lincoln's Political Actions: Southern View on Emancipation
Futurama	Head in Jar	TV	Animated Series		Deny stifying	Mocking Physical Appearance: Mole
Futurama	Evil Lincoln	TV	Animated Series	2003	Deny stifying	Making Lincoln Evil
Futurama	Lincolnbot	TV	Animated Series	2001	Deny stifying	Mocking on Lincoln's Character: Mental Disease
Hard Drink in Lincoln		TV	Animated Series	2000	Deny stifying	Mocking on Lincoln's Character: Alcoholic
Louis CK		TV	Comedy	2012	Deny stifying	Criticizing Lincoln's Political Actions: Southern View on Emancipation
Robot Chicken	Cow	TV	Animated Series	2008	Deny stifying	Critic: Warfare
The Simpsons	Cl D'oh	TV	Animated Series	2006	Deny stifying	Criticizing War
Whitest Kids U Know	Theater	TV	Comedy	2006	Deny stifying	Mocking on Character: Nerve-Wracking
Whitest Kids U Know	Security	TV	Comedy	2006	Deny stifying	Mocking on Character: Nerve-Wracking
Adventure Time	Sons of Mars	TV	Animated Series	2013	Eulogizing	The Martyr
Drunk History	Episode 5	TV	Comedy	2010	Eulogizing	Savior of the Union
Futurama	Robot Lincoln	TV	Animated Series		Eulogizing	Great Emancipator
Geico		TV	Advertisement	2010	Eulogizing	Honest Abe
Lincoln Motor Company		TV	Advertisement	2012	Eulogizing	Statesman
Mountain Dew		TV	Advertisement	2009	Eulogizing	Man of the People
Rozerem		TV	Advertisement	2005	Eulogizing	Man of the People
The Simpsons	Color Yellow	TV	Animated Series	2010	Eulogizing	Liberator
Lincoln		Film	Drama	2012	Eulogizing	Great Emancipator
Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian	1 of 3	Film	Family Comedy	2009	Eulogizing	Savior of the Union + Honest Abe
Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian	2 of 3	Film	Family Comedy	2009	Eulogizing	Savior of the Union
Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter	0.5	Film	Mashup	2012	Eul/Re-Inv.	Savior of Union, Fighting New Enemies
Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter	0.5	Film	Mashup	2012	Eul/Re-Inv.	Savior of Union, Fighting New Enemies
Adventure Time	Intro	TV	Animated Series	2007	Re-Invented	Counselor
American Dad		TV	Animated Series	2006	Re-Invented	Supporting Gay Rights
Batman: The Brave and the Bold	Lincoln Lover	TV	Animated Series	2011	Re-Invented	Fighting New Enemies
Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian	Mitfall!	Film	Family Comedy	2009	Re-Invented	Counselor
Clone High	2 of 3	TV	Animated Series	2002	Re-Invented	"Normal Guy" Lincoln: Teenager Problems
Drunk History	Chicago	TV	Comedy	2013	Re-Invented	"Normal Guy" Lincoln: Bullying
Electric Six	Gxy Bar	Internet	Music Videos	2003	Re-Invented	Supporting Gay Rights
Epic Rap Battles of History	vs Chuck Norris	Internet	Music Videos	2010	Re-Invented	Criticizing Media Hype
Epic Rap Battles of History	Obama vs Romney	Internet	Music Videos	2012	Re-Invented	Criticizing: Presidential Campaigns
Family Guy	Mentos	TV	Animated Series	2000	Re-Invented	Criticizing Advertising Industry
Futurama	Head in Jar	TV	Animated Series	2000	Re-Invented	Criticizing Advertising Industry
The Tonight Show		TV	Comedy	2009	Re-Invented	Shining on Obama
MAD	LinKong	TV	Animated Series	2013	Re-Invented	Moral Authority: Call for Leadership
Memes	Bro	Internet	Memes		Re-Invented	Representing Subculture Hipster
Memes	Quotes	Internet	Memes		Re-Invented	Criticizing: Assigning Lincoln Wrong Quotations
Memes	Bad Ass	Internet	Memes		Re-Invented	Moral Authority: Call for Leadership
Robot Chicken	Star Wars	TV	Animated Series	2007	Re-Invented	Criticizing Today's Politics: The Bush Administration
South Park		TV	Animated Series	2007	Re-Invented	"Normal Guy" Lincoln: Bullying
The Conspirator		Film	Historic Drama	2011	Re-Invented	Moral Authority: Constitution
The Simpsons		TV	Animated Series	2007	Re-Invented	Criticizing: Drug Abuse in Sports (and Desire to See Heroes Failing)
The Simpsons		TV	Animated Series		Re-Invented	Criticizing: Advertising Industry + Pro Gay Rights
Time Lincoln		Internet	Comic	2010	Re-Invented	Fighting New Enemies
Ultimate Showdown		Internet	Music Videos	2005	Re-Invented	Criticizing: On Society for Wanting Heroes Fail
Venture Bros.		TV	Animated Series	2006	Re-Invented	"Normal Guy" Lincoln: Failing
Whitest Kids U Know	War	TV	Comedy	2010	Re-Invented	Supporting Legalization of Marijuana

Distribution of Lincoln Representations



## Stills and Images from Texts Examined



Figure 1. The Lincoln Statue Talking to Still from the Movie *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*.

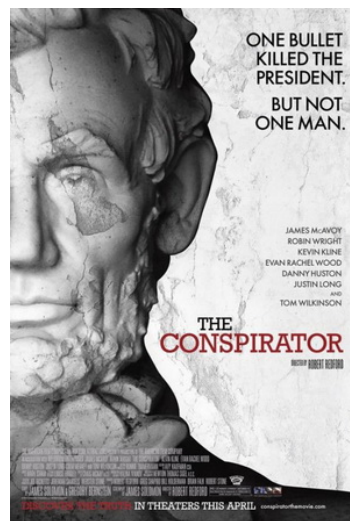


Figure 2. Movie Poster of *The Conspirator*.



Figure 3. Still from Louis C.K.'s *Saturday Night Live*. (Zakarin)



Figure 4. Still from TV advertisement “Apples to Apples”.



Figure 5. Still from TV advertisement “Geico”.



Figure 6. Still from TV Advertisement “Lincoln Motor Company”. (Vlasic)



Figure 7. Still from TV advertisement “Lincoln Motor Company”. (Heine)



Figure 8. Still from TV Advertisement “Diet Mountain Dew”. (Schreiber)



Figure 9. Still from TV Advertisement “Rozerem”. (Nudd)



Figure 10. Still from TV Series *Adventure Time*. (“Mars”)



Figure 11. Still from the Animated Series *American Dad!*. “Lincoln Lover”



Figure 12. Still from the Movie *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. (“Time Lincoln”)



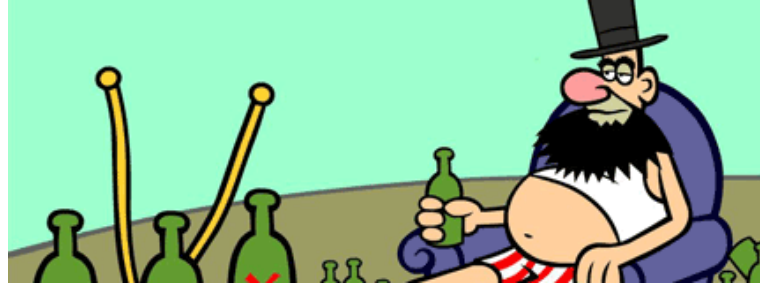


Figure 13. Still from the Animated Series *Hard Drinkin' Lincoln*. (“Hard”)



Figure 14. Still from the Animated Series *Adventure Time*. “Sons of Mars Review”.



Figure 15: Still from the Movie *Lincoln*.





Figure 16: Still from the Movie *Lincoln*. (“Lincoln November 2012”)



Figure 17: Still from the Animated Series *The Simpsons* “The Color Yellow”. (“The Simpsons 454”)



Figure 18: Still from *Drunk History*. (Schratz)



Figure 19: Still from Animated Series *Batman: the Brave and the Bold*. (Axolotl)



Figure 20. Still from the Animated Series *Robot Chicken*. (Urban Shepherd)



Figure 21: Still from the Animated Series *The Simpsons*.



Figure 22. Still from the Animated Series *Family Guy* “Mind over Murder”.



Figure 23. Scene from *Futurama*’s “Head in Jar”. (TheAnnoyingAlien )



Figure 24. Still from the Animated Series *The Simpsons* “Treehouse of Horror 19”. (Juergens)



Figure 25. Still from the Animated Series *The Simpsons*. (Juergens)



Figure 26. Still from the Music Video “Gay Bar” by *Electric Six*.



Figure 27: Scene from the Animated Series *Clone High*. (Official Homepage)



Figure 28. Still from the Animated Series *Venture Bros.* (Thill)



Figure 29. Still from the Animated Series *South Park*'s "The List".



Figure 30. Still from *Drunk History*. ("Lincoln the Lawyer")





Figure 31. Still from the Animated Series *Family Guy* “The Man with Two Brians”.



Figure 32. Still from the Animated Series *The Simpsons* “G.I. D’oh”.



Figure 33. Still from the TV Show *Dharma & Greg* “Dutch Treat”. (Relsus)



Figure 34. Still from the Animated Series *Futurama* “Insane in the Mainframe”.



Figure 35. Still from the Animated Series *Futurama* “Evil Lincoln”.

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